Golf Ryder Cup

Europe cling on for a delirious victory

David Davies at Valderrama

FOR the fifth time in the last seven matches the cup has come home. Despite a comeback of heroic proportions by the American side, who took the concluding singles series 8-4, they had been so thoroughly outplayed over the first two days that they had left themselves with too much to do.

Europe, leading by five points after the fourballs and foursomes, eventually won by a single point, 14½-13½, and Valderrama was the scene of some determined, not to say prolonged, celebrations.

Suitably it was one of their greatest stalwarts, Bernhard Langer, who secured the half-point to take his side to 14, the mark at which the cup was retained. He did so at the dramatic 17th hole and immediately the huge crowd covering the massive mound at the back of the green went barmy. "Seve, Seve, Seve", they sang and, as Jose Maria Olazábal had just passed through, "Oll-ee, Oll-ee, Oll-ee" as well. Or was it "Olé, olé, olé"?

Banners were unfurled — "Seve is the Greatest", naturally — the Swedish, Italian and German flags were prominent and six Swedes, in blue Viking helmets with yellow horns and the letters E U R O P E on their respective T-shirts, leapt up and down like a demented Scrabble line.

And talking demented, Billy Foster, the caddie nowadays to Darren Clarke but formerly for Severiano Ballesteros, jumped into the lake which the Spanish captain had built on this controversial hole and swam around like a toy yacht whose radio control has gone haywire.

Reign in Spain . . . Europe's golfers celebrate their dramatic victory PHOTOGRAPH: REBECCA NADEN

The celebrations were a little premature, given that there were still two matches on the course, but they were wholly understandable. As the Americans played superbly in the main, the tension was almost tangible and, as at Muirfield Village in 1987, when Europe led by the same margin after the team matches, 10½-5½, it was not always easy to see where the winning points were to come from.

Europe were, for example, given the worst possible start when Ian Woosnam was rapidly four down after six to Fred Couples and was beaten 8 & 7 in just over two hours.

Things like that tend to filter down the order but Europe's next two did a superb rot-stopping operation. Per-Ulrik Johansson had been given only one match before last Sunday but he was two under par against Davis Love III. Love opened with a 22-footer for a birdie at the 1st, Johansson replied with one of the same length to win.

If there was a hero of the early order, though, it was Costantino Rocca. The Italian has matured immensely since The Belfry in 1993, when he three-putted the 17th from 15 feet when two putts would have won him his match; so much so that the wunderkind Tiger Woods did not get a look-in. Woods claimed only 1½ points from five matches here, a continuation of his poor team form of Royal Porthcawl in the Walker Cup, which the Americans also lost.

Rocca was two under and three up after five, a lead he never lost, although it seemed likely he might at the 16th after driving into the trees. But he manufactured a spectacular recovery round a cork tree and on to the green, and with a bogey from Woods — he was two over for the match — Rocca was home and Europe needed 1½ points from the remaining nine matches.

An unlikely point came from Thomas Bjorn, not because the Dane is not a good player — potentially he is a great one — but because he lost the first four holes to an inspired Justin Leonard. But he chipped away at that lead and his back nine makes amazing reading. Bjorn levelled at the 10th, and in successive holes from there was one down, level, one down, level, one down, level, one up and then level again.

The winning point could have come from Olazábal, two up and three to play against Lee Janzen. But the Spaniard had previously played four Ryder Cup singles, they had all gone to the 18th and he had lost three of them. Last Sunday he lost another. Janzen birdied the 17th and 18th, so giving his team just a glimmer of hope.

Langer, however, extinguished that. Two up playing the 17th against Brad Faxon he was in the rough after two shots, with Faxon on the green 12 feet away in three. But the German played a magnificent shot to 10 feet and, when the American missed, had two putts to retain the cup. He took them.

Europe then had to find someone to turn a tie into a win and it turned out to be Colin Montgomerie. Playing Scott Hoch and needing a half-point, Monty secured his par four at the 18th and, with Hoch 20 feet away in three, offered him a halved match. Hoch accepted with alacrity.

First thing in the morning Olazábal and Rocca ran away with the last delayed foursomes match with six under par after 14 holes being far too good for Couples and Love, and the Spaniard wrapped it up with a 25-foot birdie putt at the 14th.

In fact the morning drama was concentrated on the Parnevik-Garrido v Leonard-Woods match as it went down to the last two holes all square. Over the last seven contests Europe have had much the better of matches that had reached that stage.

Europe's victory seemed a long way from the dawn thunderstorm last Friday which delayed the start of play by 100 minutes. With two foursomes matches still out on the course, bad light denied the spectators a fantastic first day. Europe and the United States halved the morning fourball matches 2-2 and then shared the completed foursome matches 1-1 in the afternoon.

On Saturday, play to complete the held-over foursomes began only the 50min late; and it did so with the rookie Lee Westwood standing over an eight-foot birdie putt at the 16th that Nick Faldo had laid on for him the previous evening. The Europeans were two up with three to play. Before putting, he watched British Open champion Leonard try to hole his birdie putt from 25 feet and fail; then, 14½ hours after Faldo hit the shot that gave him the putt, Westwood struck it. The ball was always on track, always looked good and was.

Faldo, historically not an especially good team man, said: "We gelled well, and, as we all know, that is important in foursomes." The point he earned in that match enabled him to become the most prolific scorer in Ryder Cup history with 24, overtaking the 23½ of Billy Casper. Faldo achieved his mark in 43 attempts while it took Casper only 37. But the American was playing at a time when the US won almost automatically and Faldo's is substantially the more significant achievement.

The Europeans, having gained one-and-a-half points out of two from the delayed first-day foursomes then won three-and-a-half of the four fourball matches for a lead at the time of 8-4, and by the end of a day when the ball ran for them, they went five points clear when, in the only foursomes match of the second series to finish, Montgomerie and Langer beat Janzen and Jim Furyk by 1 hole.

Cryptic crossword by Shed

Across

1 Short note of death on the road — question and make statement (14)
9 Singer carrying weapon is the winning type (7)
10 Old composer and princess in Bury (7)
11 Ladies almost moved by vision (5)
12 'New Tony' outflanks Conservatives with no end of a bad name (9)
13 Have guests come in backwards at home (9)
14 About to revise convictions (5)
15 Hanky-panky in the corner's unknown (5)
17 Science in space leads Scotsman to Irish county (9)
20 Make Gallic cook embracing chef in confusion . . . (9)
22 . . . bum outside of pig's head on skewer (5)
23 Pin securing alias on point of escape (7)
24 Returning 101 to Amin? — that's stupid! (7)
25 1 down attending 8? (5,2,3,4)

Down

1 It might be called final end of Empire (7,3,4)
2 Supremely stingy compiler acquires a home (7)
3 Poor Mary is ill likewise (9)
4 Shakespearean daughter's mother accepting one goldfield (7)
5 Calm at the tee-off, interrupting one of five (7)
6 Snake or its headless converse (5)
7 Taken to the limit during sex? Tremendous! (7)
8 Track events, exceptionally horny, due to feature in classical trio (9,5)
14 Two-way bombardment of KKK emblem (9)
16 Seasoning Shakespearean daughter between rounds (7)
17 Minaret's alternative garb (7)
18 Polished writer's catalogue of slums (7)
19 West's remnant picked up by conductor (7)
21 Feature without a series (5)

Last week's solution

El Capitán to drop the reins

IN THE aftermath of his great triumph, Europe's team captain, Severiano Ballesteros, announced that he would not be captain of the 1999 Ryder Cup side to play the Americans in Boston. "I want to recover my game," he said. "I want to play against the Americans again. I would like to be captain again sometime, perhaps in 2005 when the match is in Ireland."

For the immediate future, Sam Torrance emerged as the front runner to take over the job. If he takes over, Ballesteros has certainly provided him with a tough act to follow.

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New Russia enjoys its first Blair-hug

REVOLUTION Square was the Great Leader's first Moscow metro station. On Monday, it was the first for Tony Blair too, *writes James Meek in Moscow.*

A huge entourage followed Mr Blair down into the sombre grandeur of the underground station, built by Josef Stalin in 1938 and decorated with heavy, dark-bronze sculptures of workers, mothers and sportsmen.

A black-leather-jacketed special police squad held surprised commuters at bay, forcing the British prime minister to wheel sharply to find ordinary people to shake hands with. "There's so many people around it's hard to get to see any people," he muttered.

The train carriage that Mr Blair and his retinue squeezed aboard for a two-stop ride was decorated with an English poem — part of a British Council-sponsored programme. The Russians were said to have chosen this Roger McGough poem for Mr Blair on British advice. "I wanna be the leader I wanna be the leader/Can I be the leader? Can I? I can?/Promise? Promise? Yippee. I'm the leader/OK, what shall we do?"

Mr Blair has set as his goal the building of a friendly personal relationship with the Russian leader, and that means a demonstrative bear-hug — or in this case, a Blair-hug, which is when Boris Yeltsin's embrace is preceded by a quick handshake from the British side.

Russian male leaders tend not to kiss on their first few dates. But judging by the effusiveness of the Russian president's comments about the Prime Minister, which could have been scripted by Downing Street, the two men may have graduated to kissing.

"I love young, clever people," said the Russian leader, clasping Mr Blair. "Here we have Britain's youngest prime minister, an interesting, thrusting, energetic politician — someone with enormous support in the UK and within the Labour party."

Mr Blair's last best chance to reach out to the Russian people was his cameo role in the British-financed Russian radio soap House 7, Entrance 4, which he recorded in rainy weather in a hut on stilts behind the British embassy.

It took a rehearsal and two attempts to get it right. But he delivered his only line in Russian with gusto, translating his famous mantra of priorities — education, education and education — into a flawless: "Obrazovaniye, obrazovaniye, e yescho obrazovaniye."

Labour conference, page 10

Israel smarts at botched murder plot

Julian Borger in Gaza

THE Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, was fighting to retain his grip on power this week amid a firestorm of criticism at home, as tens of thousands of Palestinians celebrated the return to Gaza of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the radical Islamist cleric freed from jail as a result of a botched Israeli assassination plot.

After calls for his resignation, Mr Netanyahu held a press conference to explain how a murder plot in Amman last week carried out by Mossad, Israel's secret service, had rebounded so badly that Israel was forced to release the guru of Hamas's armed struggle and scores of other prisoners, uniting Palestinians — at least for a day.

Announcing a three-member committee of inquiry into the failed assassination, Mr Netanyahu said: "Sometimes, as in every war, we have mishaps and we have failures . . . The responsibility for this war is in the end mine." But he added: "We don't abandon our fighters. I think Hamas would be mistaken if it sees this setback as a change in our resolve to fight terrorism."

Israel's opposition leader, Ehud Barak, said the committee — which includes the former Mossad chief Nahum Admoni — would be powerless, and what was needed was a full state commission.

Mr Netanyahu's colleagues had appeared to distance themselves from the débâcle. The public security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, said the affair was riddled with "technical problems, tactical problems, and maybe national problems".

Israel's embarrassment was heightened by the release on Monday of some 20 more Arab political prisoners, and the news that up to 50 would be freed in the next week as part of a prisoner-exchange deal. In return, Jordan released two Mossad agents involved in the plot to kill Khaled Meshal, an exiled Hamas leader in Amman.


Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, centre, and Mossad's intended victim, Khaled Meshal, right, at an Amman news conference PHOTOGRAPH: ALI JAREKJI

Yossi Alpher of the American-Jewish Committee, an expert on Israel's intelligence services, said: "There is a growing feeling in public that this government just can't get it right. It just goes from screw-up to screw-up," he said.

Meanwhile in Gaza, Palestinians revelled in triumph. As a Jordanian army helicopter carrying Sheikh Yassin touched down, the welcoming party of dignitaries surged forwards, eager to touch a man who has assumed mythic proportions in the 10 years since he founded Hamas as a militant Islamic alternative to the secular Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Some had predicted the homecoming would be like Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 return to Tehran, but there were moments when it was more reminiscent of the ayatollah's chaotic burial, as the frail, paralysed sheikh was buffeted by the crowd.

The PLO-Hamas divide was not bridged, but it was papered over. Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority, was absent, pleading other engagements. But his wife Suha was at the helipad beside Sheikh Yassin's wife.

"This is a new start for unity. I hope my husband will soon be under less pressure and will be able to free more prisoners," Mrs Arafat said, underlining the irony that as Israel releases prisoners, hundreds of Hamas members remain locked up in Palestinian jails.

It is unclear what Sheikh Yassin's return will bode for Mr Arafat's authority. At a press conference in Amman, the sheikh appeared to contradict reports that Hamas had offered a moratorium on suicide-bomb attacks on Israeli civilian targets. He said: "There will be no halt to armed operations until the end of the occupation."

But at his home, his half-brother Mohammed said the sheikh would back a truce as soon as Israel implemented the Oslo accords. "He said: 'They have to respect what they have agreed . . . and then we will give them peace'."

The United States envoy, Dennis Ross, said after talks with the Israeli foreign minister, David Levy, and Mr Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, that Israeli-Palestinian committees suspended for seven months, would resume work on Tuesday.

● Canada recalled its ambassador to Israel last week after it was revealed that the two Mossad agents had used forged Canadian passports on their mission to Jordan.

Comment, page 14

Winchester voters must go back to the polls

Michael White

THE British High Court set the scene for one of the most intriguing byelections in recent memory when it ruled on Monday that Mark Oaten, the Liberal Democrat MP for Winchester, must re-fight the former Tory health minister, Gerry Malone, for the seat he won by two votes on May 1.

With 3,000 votes of six fringe candidates up for grabs — 2,000 of which went to Eurosceptic Tory candidates in the general election — electoral logic points to victory for Mr Malone.

He said the court ruling showed that "we won the election and there will now be a re-election and I look forward to that with relish and enthusiasm."

Mr Malone was adopted by local Tories in 1992 after the ejection of their MP, John Browne, an early casualty of the backlash against sleaze.

Mr Oaten, a 33-year-old PR executive, who did not oppose Mr Malone's application to nullify the result, said after the hearing: "We got what we wanted from the court today. Gerry Malone had asked the court to hand the Winchester constituency over to him. But the judges have said that it has to go back to the people of Winchester."

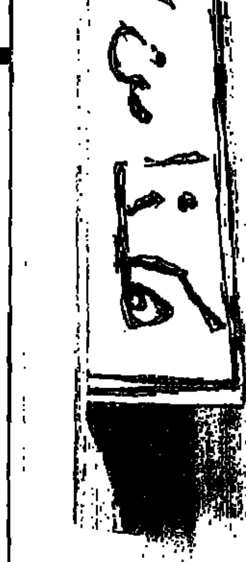
Labour, whose candidate came a poor third with 10 per cent of the vote, has not yet decided how to play it. On balance, it is expected to run again — rather than risk charges of Lib-Lab collusion — but not to try too hard.

The interaction between national and local politics will be heightened by the role of Richard Huggett, who took 640 votes as a Liberal Democrat: Top Choice for Parliament candidate on May 1. It was not clear if he would stand again. In 1992, his 10,000 votes as a "Literal Democrat" cost the Lib Dems the Devon and Plymouth East European parliamentary seat, which they lost by 700. The High Court ruled that his spoiler was within the law.

Months of legal wrangling ended when Lord Justice Brooke ruled that the May 1 result was void because 55 ballot papers had been found to be without the necessary perforated mark made at the polling station. Had this error not been made by election staff, Mr Malone would have won by two instead of Mr Oaten, it was decided — the first time such a result has been overturned in this way since 1910.

By any test, prosperous Winchester is a safe Tory seat, but the Lib Dems claim that Mr Malone, a smooth-talking politician's politician who was Stephen Dorrell's street-smart deputy at Health, is not popular on the doorstep.

Austria	AS30	Malta	60c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.50





Green plans that need a darker hue of red

MUCH as I would like to agree with many of the sentiments expressed by Larry Elliott (A green light that signals stop, not go, September 28th), I cannot accept his apparent conclusion that voters will elect a global red-green alliance that will halt the capitalistic train's headlong rush to self-destruction.

France is currently governed by a red-green alliance facing awkward questions between economic development (ie, jobs) and the environment. The Super Phoenix fast breeder reactor is to be scrapped for environmental reasons, in spite of job losses, but the Communist transport minister has decided that Charles de Gaulle airport needs additional runways, in spite of the impact on the environment.

And many French people seem to believe that they can detach their carriage from the global express, and keep it in a nice calm siding, where they will continue to enjoy the current high standard of living, well protected from the horrors of the outside world. These people have just enabled the National Front to win another election.

If we are to have a global alliance, it would be pointless without the United States, which, in spite of the low standard of living of many people, shows no signs of looking for a coherent political alternative. In the last presidential election, the blue-collar protest vote went to Pat Buchanan in the early primaries, while the Democrats, supposedly the more leftwing of the two US parties, seem to believe in the virtues of free global trade — at least as long as US economic muscle powers the global train.

The process of globalisation began centuries ago, as the Mediterranean become a vast free-trade area, creating wealth, for example, for the Cretan Minoan empire.

A mixture of greed, technical innovation and the courage of the early explorers have pushed European ideas of trade and industry to all corners of the globe. We now realise that the process we started cannot continue, that global resources are insufficient for every family in the world to own a car. But are we Europeans well placed to tell the Chinese this, quoting Gandhi in the process?

This message would only have any value if we showed we were willing to reduce our share of world resources, ie, reduce our standard of living so others can catch up and eventually we all share a sustainable happy medium. Who, in Europe or the US, is going to vote for a political party that proposes this?
Charles Wilson,
Eysines, France

I WOULD like to add a codicil to Larry Elliott's article on globalisation. The pundits blithely refer to globalisation doing this, market forces doing that and the economy doing something else — as if they could effect anything or affect us in any way. The bad news is that those jargon-phrases cannot do anything. It is people, particularly the greedies, who facilitate market forces, drive the economy and bring about globalisation — thus impinging upon us ordinary people's way of life to our detriment, while achieving their selfish, usually short-term, goals.
Robin H Griffin,
Auckland, New Zealand

Rethinking Kenyan ties

CHRIS MCGREAL'S report (Killers boost Moi's poll prospects, September 21) on the violence in Kenya in the run-up to this year's elections makes sad reading. But while McGreal's report hints darkly that the violence may be orchestrated by President Daniel arap Moi's disgraced regime, consolidating his own electoral interests even as he disowns such violence, it says nothing about the tacit forms of support given to him by the West, which allows him to think — rightly as it turns out — that he can act with economic and diplomatic impunity.

This omission is all the more striking given the short piece at the end of McGreal's report, which says that Amnesty International has urged its members to put pressure on their governments to force Kenya to end years of human rights abuses.

Surely it is time to reconsider the ties that bind the Kenyan regime and a variety of British interests. Far from seeing Moi as a rogue dictator, many in Kenya see their repressive government as the de facto representative of Western interests, without the continued support of which it couldn't survive.

As the evidence against Moi mounts, Britain continues to give huge amounts of aid to the Kenyan regime in various forms — in spite of massive internal corruption and the growing realisation that such aid rarely finds its way down to the people.
Nick Frankel,
Richmond, Virginia, USA

SOME months ago you reported that Executive Outcomes, who supply military "advisers" to regimes in developing countries in return for a slice of the country's economic resources, had supplied Paul Moi, son of the Kenyan president, with some men.

It would be interesting to know if there is any link between the alleged training camps for groups terrorising upcountry Kenyans into leaving Coast province, and thus possibly swaying elections in the president's favour, and the men employed by Paul Moi.
Elizabeth Allen,
Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

NZ performance doesn't add up

SO BRITAIN'S Liberal Democrats "want New Zealand-style performance-related pay for ministers and senior officials, with pay cuts for failure", do they (Lib Dems unite in scorn for Labour, September 28)? Alas, if only it were so. The truth is that New Zealand cabinet ministers along with all other members of parliament, judges, and most senior executives in the public sector, have their pay set by a privileged system of relatives that has been long abolished for all other public servants, who must take their chances on the unregulated labour market.

There is no performance component in the salaries of ministers. And while there are performance payments associated with the salaries of some senior officials, the suggestion that these might be withheld in the interest of concentrating minds would cause bitter laughter in this country. Performance bonuses continue to be paid notwithstanding the most bizarre administrative failures perpetrated by their recipients.

What is more alarming is that the "reforms" effected in New Zealand can still find admirers when it is abundantly clear to all but their blindest proponents that they have signally failed to deliver consistent economic growth, employment, and productivity improvements, and that they have been a social disaster, especially in the fields of health and education. All your British readers should be praying that a Blair government does not take them down the same path.
Tony Simpson,
Wellington, New Zealand

Wrong lens on Lebanon

READING Julian Borger's piece "Hizbullah success leaves Israel in shock" (September 14), one could get the impression that Hizbullah, the Amal militia and the Lebanese army were the aggressors when they ambushed an Israeli navy unit that had come ashore (on a commando raid). Do we need to remind ourselves that Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon is still an arbitrary and aggressive act that gives Israel no territorial rights there?

Mr Borger gives us a portrait of ridiculous mourning for "guerrilla leaders and fundamentalist imams" (or resistance fighters and religious leaders according to one's point of view) whom the equally ridiculous, misguided and opportunistic locals regard as their proponents.

Since no such portrait is provided of the Israelis, are we permitted to ask, in the same spirit, if mourning for their dead should also be regarded as ridiculous?
Nancy Roberts,
Cairo, Egypt

Relative burden of Saudi law

WHAT appals me in the Saudi nurses' murder case is not so much the system of justice in that country, but more the attitude of Frank Gilford, brother of the murdered woman, Yvonne Gilford. The two nurses concerned were found guilty although the "evidence" against them consisted of confessions, later retracted.

In Australia, where Mr Gilford lives, their confessions alone would not have secured their conviction. I therefore fail to understand why, in the interests of ordinary humanity, he did not agree to waive his rights in this case a long time ago and ask for the death penalty to be set aside, rather than keeping Ms Parry and her family in what must be agonising suspense.
Paul M Brennock,
Douglas, Isle of Man

IS THE sentence of 500 lashes deeply offensive to the British public? I find the fact that two nurses have been convicted of murdering a colleague and proven to have stolen from the victim after the slaying more offensive. Who are we to judge the legal system of other countries when ours has on occasion been found wanting?
Ian McLean,
Barking, Essex

Briefly

"*VITAL* international assistance to Haiti . . . continues to be held up because of delays by the government in implementing key reforms, including privatisation" (September 21). What exactly are the blessings of privatisation, which dominant nations are so keen to confer on countries such as Haiti? In a country such as Britain you have faltering services, rising prices that hurt the poor most, shareholders' interests paramount over users' needs, pegged earnings for the workforce, and obscenely fat salaries for those at the top. In Russia, privatisation has been catastrophic for most of the population. The almighty scam, of course, is that the predators will be the saviours.
Paul Winstanley,
Palmerston North, New Zealand

THE headline "New Caledonians itch for independence" (September 14) summed up the whole matter. The French have this perverted national pride that leads them to feel they can stay in a place for ever, whatever others may think. France is guilty of selfishness, not racism. But I predict that the sun will set on Paris's empire in Oceania within the foreseeable future.
William R Brown,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

SIGNIFICANTLY, it was Carmarthenshire that eventually changed a minority Yes vote into a majority in Wales (September 28). It was this area that elected the first Plaid Cymru MP (Gwynfor Evans) in 1966. Carmarthen has legendary links with the seer Merlin, who, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, made the following prophecy: "The race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders".
Glyn Welden Banks,
Espoo, Finland

MOST of the artists in Sensation have in common a po-faced sententiousness in place of irony and a mistaking of dogma for personal intelligence (September 28). They have all had importance conferred on them by being collected by Charles Saatchi, who has a high public profile, loads of money and a good eye for investment — but no apparent understanding of the continuum of art.
Roland Crisp,
London

HERE'S a way to make Britain's code of press conduct stick (October 5). Any paper that breaks it is banned from publishing photos. Editors would have to use words, and only words, to convey the news. This just might lead to improvements in journalistic standards.
David Fine,
Bakewell, Derbyshire

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Croats surrender for trial

Ian Traynor in Bonn

ONE OF Bosnia's most wanted suspected war criminals, Dario Kordic, a senior Croat political leader and warlord, was behind bars in The Hague this week after surrendering with nine other Croat indictees to the international war crimes tribunal.

The surrender of the 10 Bosnian Croats, indicted mostly in connection with the murder of hundreds of Muslim civilians in central Bosnia in 1993, represented a coup for the tribunal and followed intense United States pressure on the regime of the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman.

Mr Kordic, aged 36, a protégé of the Croatian defence minister and virulent nationalist Gojko Susak, was a military commander appointed by Zagreb to head the Bosnian wing of Mr Tudjman's ruling nationalist party.

Mr Kordic and another military chief, Tihomir Blaskic, were indicted in 1995 on charges of commanding the ethnic cleansing campaign against Muslims in central Bosnia's Lasva valley in 1993. He is also held responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the 42-month Bosnian war — notably the massacre of 120 Muslim civilians in the central Bosnian village of Ahmici in April 1993. British troops under the command of Colonel Bob Stewart found women and children burned alive in their cellars.

The charge sheet in The Hague says of the Ahmici massacre: "Every Muslim house in the village was burned, and many unarmed Muslim civilians were deliberately and systematically shot . . . Before the attack on April 16, Muslims were 356 out of a total population of 466. After the attack no Muslims were left in the village."

The arrest of Mr Kordic, the most senior political figure to have been taken into custody, is a fillip to the teams of international prosecutors, investigators and lawyers working to bring the Balkans' most notorious figures to court.

The arrival of the 10 on Monday from the Adriatic port of Split almost doubles the number of those being held or already tried, the majority of whom are Croats.

Speaking in Paris of a "very important step", the US defence secretary, William Cohen, said the surrenders "should send a strong signal" that war criminals in the former Yugoslavia must be brought to justice.

But there is a glaring contrast between Croatian and Serbian co-operation with the tribunal — 57 of the 78 people known to be indicted are Serbs. Prosecutors also have a secret list of indictees.

The most wanted men, the Bosnian Serb political and military chiefs Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, remain defiantly at large and the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, spurns co-operation with the tribunal.

Before the surrender of Mr Kordic's group, there were arguments and negotiations over the speediness of their trials. The tribunal has only one courtroom, is short of funds, and is hard-pressed to accommodate all those in custody.

The Kordic case could shed light on the close links between the Zagreb regime and its proxies in Bosnia.

Dark cloud descends on Jakarta

John Aglionby in Jakarta

THE smog that is enveloping much of Southeast Asia swept into the Indonesian capital Jakarta for the first time on Friday last week as the government revoked the permits of 29 of the companies it believes started the fires that have caused the haze.

The companies, none of them named, are among the 66 that failed to submit reports rebutting accusations that they had started fires. They will fall foul of the first major Indonesian government action against the timber and plantation barons accused of setting alight up to 1.5 million acres of forest, plantation and scrubland.

Blown by easterly winds, the smoke from fires in east and central Java cast a depressing pall for several hours over the Jakarta skyscrapers before the sun burnt it away late in the afternoon. Meteorologists predict that the capital will be affected for at least two weeks.

Most ministers are refusing to accept responsibility for the fires and haze. Last week they banned a protest march by the country's leading environmental group, the Indonesian Environmental Forum, which is critical of the way the crisis is being handled.

International efforts to extinguish the fires were stepped up when the United Nations increased the size of its disaster team in Indonesia from four to seven people. But the UN said there was little sign of an end to the smog, which is also blighting Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

Gerard Kramer, the leader of the UN disaster relief team, said more experts had been called in because the problem was bigger than originally thought. "This is because peat fires are intensifying and, as some of the peat-beds are up to 10 metres deep, they are very difficult to put out," he said.

A Western satellite-image analyser estimated that up to 10,000 hotspots were still being detected across Indonesia every day. While many of the fires have been burning for some time, it was also clear that new ones were starting every day, he said.

Amazon fires, page 5



Serbian riot police beat protesters in the region of Kosovo last week. Some 20,000 ethnic Albanian students were peacefully demonstrating for access to Pristina university when police waded into the crowd using tear-gas and clubs. Dozens of protesters were injured PHOTOGRAPH: GORAN TOMASEVIC

Boycott threatens Serbian election

Karen Coleman in Belgrade and agencies

INDEPENDENT election monitors said the turnout in the second round of Serbia's presidential election last Sunday failed to exceed the 50 per cent threshold needed for a valid result.

The Centre for Free Elections and Democracy said less than half of the 7.2 million electorate had voted. If confirmed by the election commission, the figures mean that neither the Socialist candidate, Zoran Lilic — the nominee of the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic — nor his ultra-nationalist challenger, Vojislav Seselj, can be elected.

The Democratic party leader, Zoran Djindjic, mayor of Belgrade until he was dismissed by Mr Milosevic, had urged Serbians not to endorse the elections by voting.

If less than 50 per cent of the electorate votes, the presidential elections have to be re-staged, which could push Serbia into further political chaos. The Socialist acting president, Dragan Tomic, will remain temporarily in office if fresh elections are needed.

Mr Seselj, the Radical party leader who opposes the Dayton peace process in Bosnia, had at first claimed the turnout would exceed the 50 per cent minimum needed. He later conceded that he would probably not gain the presidency but expressed confidence that he would secure a re-run of the election later this year.

On Monday, the election commission spokesman, Nebojisa Radic, said that Mr Seselj led the Socialist party candidate, Mr Lilic, by 49.98 per cent to 46.99 with votes from 85 per cent of the polling stations counted.

"Neither candidate at this point has met the conditions for election as president of the republic," he added. The commission was expected to issue final official results later this week.

A Socialist party spokesman acknowledged Mr Seselj's slight lead and said voter turnout was 48.68 per cent.

In a simultaneous vote in the other remaining Yugoslav republic, Montenegro, two arch rivals appeared to be heading for a runoff with neither achieving the 50 per cent needed for outright victory.

The two elections were a test of Mr Milosevic's grip on power. In the parliamentary elections last month, his ruling alliance lost its majority and control of the Serbian assembly.

Mr Seselj's party doubled its seats to 82. No government has been formed. Mr Seselj has offered to discuss forming a coalition with Mr Milosevic's Socialists or with opposition parties.

The two candidates on offer for the presidency indicate that little has changed in Serbian politics. Both represent authoritarian parties and neither is likely to lead the country to a democratic and brighter future.

Mr Lilic, a colourless figure, was the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until last June. As Mr Milosevic's protégé, he is unlikely to challenge his leader, allowing him to remain in control of Yugoslav politics.

In a television debate with Mr Seselj, Mr Lilic did not appear predisposed to the democratic ideal. "We Serbs are really genetically predestined for big things at the intellectual level. We are above many in Europe," he said.

His opponent is even more extreme. Mr Seselj, a large, loud and red-faced radical, is a hardline nationalist who led paramilitary forces during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. He talks of creating a Greater Serbia, extending its borders through Bosnia and Croatia into Germany, and is scathing about both the Dayton agreement for Bosnia and United States policy in the Balkans.

On Monday, the US envoy for former Yugoslavia, ambassador Robert Gelbard, called Mr Seselj a fascist, saying Washington could not work with him as he represented "backwardness" and "darkness".

The Week

IN an emotional ceremony at the former second world war deportation camp at Drancy, north of Paris, France's Roman Catholic bishops apologised to Jews for the Church's complicity in 73,000 Holocaust deaths.
Le Monde, page 22

HUNDREDS of thousands of Christian men, known as Promise Keepers, took part in a quest for spiritual renewal, praying and singing among the monuments of Washington.
Washington Post, page 15

THE US announced it had sent the aircraft carrier Nimitz to the Gulf four days earlier than scheduled in response to an Iranian bombing raid on bases of the anti-Tehran opposition movement, the Mujahideen Khalq, in southeastern Iraq.

ALGERIAN newspapers said that more than 60 civilians were killed in new massacres and that government troops had killed 40 Muslim rebels.

SOUTH Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission said it had ordered the former president, P W Botha, to testify on his government's strategy to quell black resistance during apartheid.

NICK SHERRY, an Australian Labour politician bitterly attacked by the government for his travel claims, was taken to hospital after trying to commit suicide by slashing his wrists. He was said to be in a stable condition in a Canberra hospital.

HUMAN Rights Watch, a US-based group, called on Saudi Arabia — which has publicly beheaded 115 people this year — to halt all executions. Meanwhile UK firms have lodged nearly $1.2 million in an Australian bank to pay for the death penalty waiver of a British nurse charged with murder.

FATHER Tissa Balasuriya, the Sri Lankan Catholic theologian excommunicated by the Vatican in January for alleged heresy, has been denied a visa to visit Italy.

BIZARRE and sadistic initiation rites forced on new college students and tolerated for generations as innocent fun have been banned by the French government following a long and vocal campaign by parents and social workers.

THE US space shuttle Atlantis landed in Florida, ending the 145-day orbit of astronaut Michael Foale, who was aboard the Russian Mir space station.

QUEEN Elizabeth II arrived in Islamabad on a visit to help Pakistan and India celebrate 50 years of independence from British rule.

French trial will examine shame of Vichy

Paul Webster in Paris

FRANCE will be forced to face up to its appalling anti-Semitic past when the 10-week trial of Maurice Papon for wartime crimes against humanity opens this week in a hearing seen as a national examination of conscience.

Mr Papon, aged 87 — who will be protected by a bulletproof screen — was responsible for Jewish affairs only in Bordeaux. But the nine jury members and three judges will be implicitly asked to pass an historic judgment on the cowardice, self-interest and cynicism of Philippe Pétain's government, which helped the Nazis to murder thousands of Jews.

Mr Papon will spend the night before the trial begins in a Bordeaux jail and will immediately ask the court to free him from having to spend every night behind bars until the case concludes on December 23.

If the court allows him to appear freely, he will personally defend claims that as a civil servant in German-occupied territory he had no choice in sending French police to round up 1,560 Jews. They were transferred to the Drancy concentration camp near Paris, and then to gas chambers at Auschwitz between 1942 and 1944.

If the custody order is not revoked, Mr Papon will remain silent and leave it to his lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, to defend what is left of his honour.

Whether it is Mr Papon or Mr Varaut who argues the case, the defence's central premise is simple. Vichy was a legitimate regime, put in place by parliament in 1940. As a civil servant, Mr Papon took an oath of allegiance to Marshal Pétain, author of collaborationist policies with the Nazis over which functionaries had no discretion. Its policy was to hand over to the Nazis immigrant and French Jews, of whom nearly 75,000 were murdered.

Although a defence of obedience to orders has been discredited since Nuremberg for members of the military, the civilian equivalent is still a murkily-defined area, giving the French jury the chance of setting an international precedent in its final ruling that could make all officials think twice during moments of grave crisis.

This is the third trial in French history for crimes against humanity, although several attempts collapsed because the accused died while under investigation. The two previous trials, both of which ended in life sentences, involved armed and uniformed men. They died in prison, the prospect Mr Papon faces.

Neither case touched the question of bureaucratic responsibility. The 1987 trial of Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo chief in Lyon, was a sequel to Nuremburg. He had no hope of release after classic evidence of the persecution, torture and murder of Jews. The 1994 trial of a Frenchman, Paul Touvier, a leader of the Lyon *milice* — the police force created by the Vichy government to help the Gestapo — moved on to new ground because he had been given refuge by the Catholic Church for 50 years.

Confirmation of the Catholic Church's role as Pétain's principal moral support started the process that led to French bishops asking for the forgiveness of Jews last week. The Touvier trial also broke down resistance, led by the late President François Mitterrand, to a general condemnation of the Vichy government.

Two months after his election as president in May 1995, Jacques Chirac denounced Vichy as a criminal regime, putting an end to years of semantic evasion throughout the French establishment.

Since 1983, when school textbooks first acknowledged that the French police were the principal arm of repression against the Jews, the popular view of Vichy as a criminal state had already become generally accepted by younger generations. Historians have since more than made up ground on anti-Vichy revelations and analyses once led by foreign writers.

It has taken 16 years of legal battles led by two lawyers, Serge Klarsfeld and Gérard Boulanger, to bring about Mr Papon's trial.



Papon: on trial for war crimes

Le Monde, page 22

Summit to boost rights in Europe

Stephen Bates in Brussels

AN EXTENSION of human rights in 40 European countries — including the ability to appeal directly against governments to a streamlined Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg — was expected to be agreed at a summit in Strasbourg on Friday.

The gathering of leaders for only the second summit in the Council of Europe's 48-year history may produce a breakthrough in improving the rights of 800 million citizens from Iceland to Ukraine.

The council, which concentrates on human rights, was set up at the urging of Winston Churchill in 1949. Countries have to demonstrate their commitment to democracy and the judicial process to become members — at least in theory. Croatia joined last year along with Russia, but Belarus had its guest status revoked in January. Bosnia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan also have guest status and are waiting for full membership.

It is in such countries, unused to citizens' rights and democracy, that the reforms are expected to have the most impact.

"This is a development of immense importance in human rights across Europe. A person living in Ukraine or Turkey can appeal direct to the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg," said Daniel Tarschys, the Swedish secretary-general of the council.

The summit is also expected to support declarations banning human cloning and commitments to improved protection for minority groups such as migrant workers. A declaration on stronger child protection laws and a commitment to sexual equality are also planned.

The right of direct appeal will emerge from proposals to streamline the workings of the European Court of Human Rights and to appoint a human rights ombudsman. Until now complaints have been investigated by a commission and forwarded to a committee of ministers of member states before being brought before the court — a process that can take up to five years.

A lifeboat full of passengers approaches a rescue ship after evacuating the cruise liner MV Romantica in the Mediterranean near Cyprus. Fire broke out in the engine room last Saturday, leading to the evacuation of 600 passengers PHOTOGRAPH: MARCO DI GIULIO

US to ban child labour imports

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

THE United States Congress last week passed its first legislation to ban imported goods made by forced child labour — a measure that will have a huge impact on manufacturing communities in the Third World and on domestic consumption.

The legislation is intended to help end child slavery around the world and the bonded labour of millions of children, some as young as four.

It inevitably creates a moral dilemma: the potential closure of factories and sweatshops that employed child labour and supplied the US market is likely to leave poor communities even poorer.

The bill — which has emerged from a long incubation of quiet backroom manoeuvre — was sponsored by an independent member of Congress, Bernard Sanders of Vermont, who calls it "an extremely important moral issue". He sees the children who make rugs from India or toys from China as "indentured servants or virtual slaves".

Products affected will include carpets and rugs, sports shoes, footballs, toys and trinkets.

The US followed European countries in banning child labour in the early years of this century, but there has never been an attempt by a government to legislate against the import of goods made by enslaved or indentured children.

There has been a ruling from Fifa, the international football authority, that it would not use balls made by child labour.

Leading the campaign against child labour have been such figures as Terry Collingsworth of the International Labour Rights Fund, based in Washington, who toured India and Nepal for four years researching the abuse of children making rugs and carpets.

"You could walk into the factories at will," he says, "and see children looking like they could fall over at any moment." Supervisors, he said, used hot irons to sear shut cuts on the children's fingers from endless stitching so they would not bleed on the fabrics.

Children across India and the Pacific Rim are sold into bondage by their parents to make goods for export to the US, says the Human Rights Watch organisation. Children are chained to their looms, and remain bonded until the age of 21, when they have to pay interest on their debts and pay for any mistakes.

Although the new legislation has the support of the Clinton administration and is expected to receive the president's seal of approval, it will not necessarily secure the funding needed to implement it.

Iraq 'misleading arms inspectors'

THERE is still serious concern about the extent of Saddam Hussein's co-operation with United Nations inspectors, according to the diplomat leading efforts to monitor and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, *writes Ian Black in New York*.

Richard Butler, head of the UN special commission, Unscom, indicated that Iraq's submission of a 640-page account of its biological weapons efforts fell short of being a "full, final and complete disclosure", as required — and that a report due to be published next month was unlikely to give Iraq a clean bill of health.

"There are a number of reasons to have serious concerns that the Iraqis continue to attempt to guide us away from or tell us less than the truth," Mr Butler told the Guardian. "I mean they should not remove documents from sites or burn them, but leave them for us to look at."

The latest Unscom report, prepared by its 150 staff in New York and the Baghdad monitoring and verification centre, will be the first since June, when the UN Security Council threatened to take new punitive measures if Iraq failed to co-operate. Oil sanctions, which are crippling its economy, can be lifted only when the commission's work is done.

Senior Iraqi officials are worried that the US and Britain, the leading Security Council hawks, will demand travel restrictions, further limiting their contact with the outside world.

Ominously, Unscom reported new problems only last month. In one incident, an Iraqi official on a UN helicopter had to be restrained for fear he would seize the controls during an inspection flight over Tikrit military barracks. In another incident two days later, a biological team was prevented from inspecting the Sarabadi Republican Guard base.

Iraq has good reason to loathe Unscom's operation, which uses sophisticated sensors, sniffers, remote cameras, ground-penetrating radar and high-altitude U2 spy planes. Threats, lying and obstruction are normal hazards.

Significant progress has been made since 1991 in documenting Iraq's nuclear, ballistic missile and chemical weapons programmes, but its biological warfare capacity remains very much a "black hole".

Mr Butler, previously Australia's ambassador to the UN and a highly respected arms control negotiator, was lavishly praised by the Iraqis when he took over from the veteran Swedish diplomat Rolf Ekeus in July. But he makes no attempt to conceal his impatience.

"Two weeks ago in Baghdad I complained trenchantly to the Iraqis that they had still not made available their full, final and complete declaration on biological weapons," he said.

US alert over forest fires in Amazonia

Paul Brown

THOUSANDS of fires are burning 26,000 sq km of Amazon rainforest as loggers, cattle ranchers and peasants take advantage of the region's dry season to clear land for farming.

The fires — which are on as great a scale as those raging across Indonesia — are being monitored by a United States National Space Research Institute satellite.

It shows that the number of fires deliberately started in the 41 days to September 21 — the traditional dry season — is 28 per cent higher than last year, 24,549 compared with 19,115: an average of 599 fires a day compared with 466 in 1996.

More than half are in the Mato Grosso region, which has received a $240 million World Bank loan intended to halt deforestation. The logging capital, Manaus, is suffering a smog similar to that which has been covering much of Indonesia and Malaysia — the first experienced in the Amazon region.

According to experts at the US Environment Defence Fund, burning is also taking place in the Amazon states of Para and, to a lesser extent, Tocantins, Rondonia and Maranhão.

The Fund believes that the records probably understate the amount of forest clearance because they only cover the largest and longest-burning fires. Some fires started during the day have burnt out by the time the satellite passes.

The figures show that the rate of deforestation, which was thought to be slowing down at the time of the Rio Earth Summit in the early 1990s, is increasing again. Since records began in the early 1980s, more than 12 per cent of the Amazon forest has been destroyed.

Sarah Tyack, a Friends of the Earth spokeswoman, said the figures were causing alarm. "We are very concerned at the sheer scale of deforestation," she said. "The logging in the region is very great and once the forest has been thinned it is easier to burn."

She said the dry season had been longer and drier than normal, increasing the likelihood that some of the fires were out of control.



EU sets example on greenhouse gases

Martin Walker in Brussels

EUROPE is on track to beat its self-imposed target for the reduction of global warming emissions to below 1990 levels by 2000, the European Commission boasted last week.

The unexpected success gave credibility to its new offer to cut emissions to 15 per cent lower than 1990 levels by 2010, it claimed. The offer, designed to put pressure on the United States and Japan to reach a tough pact on global warming at the Kyoto summit in December, had been questioned by US officials as unrealistic.

Three unexpected factors explained the European success, said Jorgen Henningsen, the director of environmental quality. The first was Britain's shift from coal to gas-fired power stations, which would allow Britain to claim a 6 per cent drop in greenhouse gas emissions by 2000.

The closure of obsolete and dirty factories in the former East Germany meant the Germans were on track for a 12 per cent cut in emissions. And France's nuclear power stations were performing "better than expected", reducing the need to burn fossil fuels. Finally, the European recession had kept down energy demand in other countries, he said.

The offer of a 15 per cent cut by 2010 is conditional on the US and Japan following suit. If Europe tried to go it alone, it would soon suffer a backlash as energy-intensive industries decamped for easier climes.

The Commission issued its detailed plan on emission reduction ahead of this week's special conference at the White House, where the US was expected to thrash out its own negotiating position for Kyoto. Under pressure from Congress and corporations to make no commitment that could damage industry, raise taxes or threaten jobs, the US had tried to fend off the European Union initiative as unrealistic.

The US is also hoping to promote two alternative plans that would ease its own obligations. The first would seek to require developing countries to pledge their own cuts. The other is for a market in trading emission rights between polluters, so that companies that had outperformed their target by investing in clean technology could "sell" their pollution credits to dirtier plants.

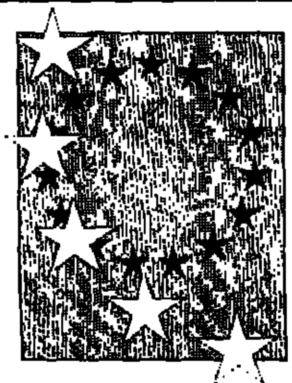
● More than 1,500 of the world's most distinguished scientists have urged leaders to prevent the "potentially devastating consequences of human-induced global warming". Their petition, supported by 104 of the 138 surviving recipients of science Nobel prizes, was presented to President Clinton last week.

Comment, page 14



Trigger happy . . . A crane moves automatic weapons at a Melbourne scrapyard, where they were to be melted down after a deadline to turn in illegal arms for money expired last week PHOTOGRAPH: JERRY GALEA

Big names duck Beatrix's bash



Europe this week

Martin Walker

IN A delicate compromise between regal pageantry and commercial values, the Treaty of Amsterdam was signed in the Burghers Hall of the Dutch royal palace in Amsterdam last week in a ceremony that brought to mind the curious Sherlock Holmes case of the dog that failed to bark in the night.

Here was a formal treaty, signed 40 years after the European Community's founding ceremony in Rome, and five years after the Maastricht treaty. Once attested by all 15 member states, the document will be taken to Rome to rest alongside those other two grand treaties in the archives of the European project.

So where was everybody? Everybody who is anybody, that is. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands was there. So were her prime minister and the prime minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker. The president of the European Commission, the former Luxembourg premier Jacques Santer turned up, along with José Maria Gil-Robles, the president of the European Parliament.

Valiant and honourable men, but not quite of the calibre of the absentees such as Germany's Helmut Kohl, France's Jacques Chirac or Britain's Tony Blair.

To be frank, what Brussels sees as the broadly disappointing outcome of the Amsterdam treaty negotiations last June may not deserve a turnout of the stars. The draft speech Santer had intended to deliver, until he was persuaded it would be ungracious to his Dutch hosts, had meant to criticise the treaty quite bluntly.

"I do not hide its insufficiencies, its weaknesses, its great gaps — notably in the field of institutional reform," read his draft speech, but dropped from his formal address. He had intended to go on to say: "We have drawn the lessons from Maastricht — it has at last become indispensable in the eyes of all to come to grips with the real concerns of our citizens." But he dropped that bit too.

The weight of symbolism hung heavily upon Santer, speaking in the great palace originally built as the Amsterdam town hall of the 17th century Dutch republic.

Some of the old echoes remain, like the statuary figure above the heads of the assembled signatories to the treaty, which portrayed the figure of justice, bearing not just the scales of justice but also the tools of punishment: an axe, whips, staves, fearsome pincers and things that the guide book describes as "assorted implements of torture". As Santer enunciated the watered-down truisms of diplo-speak, he raised his suffering eyes to the figure of justice, and looked as if some of those implements had been used on him.

His draft speech had been nothing but the truth. Amsterdam produced a thin and spineless treaty, which may be why the British government was quietly satisfied with it. Meeting in Corfu in 1994, the European Council had defined the future task of the Amsterdam summit clearly enough: "The institutional conditions for ensuring the proper functioning of the Union must be created at the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference, which for that reason must take place before accession negotiations begin".

As the strongly pro-European think-tank, the European Policy Centre, commented immediately after the Amsterdam treaty was agreed last June: "By that crucial litmus test the heads of government totally failed in their self-appointed task."

There was no reweighting of votes within the Council of Ministers and no reduction in the already unwieldy number of 20 commissioners, some of them visibly underemployed. And the pattern now seems to be set that each of the new members will get their own commissioners too. That will mean 26 of them, when there is really work for perhaps half that number. Amsterdam delivered some modest improvement in the powers of the parliament, but no real streamlining of the European institutions, and pitifully little extension of the much-vaunted plans for qualified majority votes.

The reason for that, however, was the really important change to emerge from Amsterdam. Germany, traditionally the most potent supporter of institutional reforms, suddenly started acting in the old obstructive way that Britain perfected over the past decade. Because of domestic political pressure from the German provinces, Kohl personally vetoed most of the proposals for majority votes, rather than strive to achieve the traditional unanimity. In Kohl's now-celebrated visit to the lavatory during the Amsterdam haggling, his deputy said Germany could agree to qualified majority votes in cultural matters. Kohl came back, drying his hands, and squashed that agreement before he sat down.

Amsterdam thus saw the moment when Germany ceased to be the conciliatory and federalising bankroller of the European project, and became strikingly more pragmatic and querulous, if not qualifying outright for Eurosceptic status. Certainly the coming of the new Socialist-led government in Paris had dismayed Kohl, and cast real doubt over durability of the Franco-German axis, the traditional locomotive of the European project.

Not by coincidence, this was also the moment when Germany's ever-open wallet began to close. Germany now accounts for two-thirds of the net contributions to the $90 billion EU budget. Stretched by the trillion-dollar burden of absorbing East Germany throughout this decade, Kohl became Chancellor Nein.

But if Germany became less conciliatory at Amsterdam, Britain became less confrontational. At least in its rhetoric, and in some of its votes on reform, the Labour government said that it wanted to be part of the solution in Europe rather than part of the problem.

So for all its disappointments as a treaty to remodel and modernise the Union ready for the wave of new entrants, Amsterdam signalled a historic shift in the political character of Europe. But beyond the commitment to monetary union, and the rather less certain one to enlargement, nobody is sure what this new Europe is becoming — which helps to explain last week's disappointing turnout at the signing party.

Crumbs from the top table fail to nourish UN

COMMENT
Ian Black

LAMBERTO DINI, the Italian foreign minister, was looking gloomy as he cruised the corridors of the United Nations last week searching in vain for backers for his country's bid for a seat at the world's top table.

He was not cracking jokes — and certainly not the old favourite in which a man whinges in a pantomime Italian accent: "Germany and Japan are going to join the Security Council. Why not us? *We* lost the war, too."

From speeches in the General Assembly, it is clear that there is wide support for unfreezing the status quo to bring in the vanquished of 1945 — now two of the world's richest countries — and adding more seats round the table.

The UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, called explicitly for German and Japanese accession and for "a balance between developed and developing countries in a modernised Council", but he conspicuously named no other names.

This is no mere detail: most Latin American countries are not prepared to have Lusophone Brazil representing a predominantly Spanish-speaking continent. India and Pakistan have rival claims, as do Indonesia and Malaysia. Africa's hopefuls — Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt — are all problematic.

And that is just for starters, without the vexed question of whether the members of an expanded council, permanent or rotating, should have a veto. Vetoes are wielded only by the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain, otherwise known as the Permanent Five. (No one even dares ask whether the Europeans might share a seat.)

UN insiders argue that expansion is unlikely this year. Some wonder aloud whether the Permanent Five, bottoms firmly on seats, are not talking up the issue and inflating expectations.

This is part of a broader picture: hope of radical change at the UN, so high a few months ago when Kofi Annan took over as secretary-general from the much (and in many ways unfairly) reviled Boutros Boutros-Ghali, seem to be fading as the size of the task ahead becomes apparent.

Mr Annan was followed to the assembly podium by Bill Clinton, saying many good things about the UN's role but also making it clear that the US's unpaid dues will be forthcoming only on US terms.

Their conditions for repayment include writing off nearly half the US debt of $1.6 billion and reducing the US share of UN expenses from 25 per cent to 20 per cent, when its share of world income is 27 per cent.

So with little prospect of joy on the payment front, Mr Annan's other plans seem destined for trouble. He has done what he can, but important parts of his reform programme require General Assembly approval.

Tanzania's foreign minister, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, spoke for many in the Third World when he called the proposals for a leaner bureaucracy a "basis for discussion" but argued that the emphasis should be put on development projects.

Vested interests are hard to shift: long-overdue plans to slim down the department for public information, for example, are encountering opposition from the Group of 77, who see a hidden US hand behind a proposals which genuinely aims to make the institution more effective.

The North-South divide seems to be widening. As Mary Robinson embarks on the novel mission of the UN's first commissioner for human rights, Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad wants to rewrite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to take account of cultural differences.

On another front, UN peacekeeping, a staple of the immediate post cold-war years, is still reeling from the débâcle in Somalia and a mixed record in Bosnia.

The net impression is that the UN can be steadied by a firm hand on the tiller under Mr Annan's stewardship, but it looks unlikely to sail very far.

It is a truism that the UN is only as effective as its members want it to be. Not all 185 are equally guilty of not trying hard enough. But with plans being laid for a Millennium assembly after the non-event of the 50th anniversary two years ago, it would be useful if everyone — from the US downwards — would admit that greater effort is needed to support the only United Nations we've got.

US death row inspected

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

THE United States is being put under the kind of scrutiny by the United Nations that it usually urges for other countries as an international team investigating its use of the death penalty toured the South last week.

The UN inquiry is being led by Bacre Ndiaye, a leading human rights investigator from Senegal. He is the second such UN monitor of the US. The first was on racism in 1992. Like his predecessor, Mr Ndiaye was initially welcomed by the administration, which approved his tour last year, and he was expecting to meet senior politicians.

Requests were made to meet President Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore. Mr Ndiaye says he was especially eager to meet the attorney-general, Janet Reno, and representatives of the supreme court.

But these have been refused. During the first few days of his tour, visiting prisons and trying to talk to politicians, Mr Ndiaye had to be content with junior officials, two congressmen, and no senators.

Officials at the UN were anxious to point out, however, that Mr Ndiaye was touring Washington during the penultimate week of the congressional term, and that politicians were "very, very busy".

Mr Ndiaye was appointed under the auspices of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which urges member states to enforce an international convention curbing the expansion of "summary or arbitrary executions". He said the US was second, after China, in expanding the death penalty.

Washington Post, page 16

Bickering poisons New Zealand coalition

Anthony Hubbard in Wellington

NEW ZEALAND'S experiment with coalition government has turned into a shambles. One year after the country switched from the first-past-the-post system to the German form of proportional representation, its politics have acquired an air of farce and bewilderment.

The centre-right coalition led by two former foes — the prime minister, Jim Bolger, and the deputy prime minister, Winston Peters — is now profoundly unpopular. A series of scandals and spats has slashed support for Mr Peters's New Zealand First (NZF) party to 1 or 2 per cent.

This in turn has poisoned the senior coalition partner, Mr Bolger's conservative National party. National has plummeted in the polls, putting Mr Bolger's leadership under serious threat. The matey embrace of the two politicians now threatens to strangle them both.

Mr Peters, a populist turned kingmaker after NZF won 13 per cent of the vote at last October's election, has suffered two huge defeats in recent weeks. Last month voters overwhelmingly rejected — by 92 per cent in a referendum — his proposal for a compulsory superannuation scheme.

Earlier, a commission of inquiry found that Mr Peters had no evidence to back his accusation that large companies were practising tax evasion. The Winebox affair, so named after the crate in which allegedly incriminating documents were found, has been a long-running Peters campaign.



Peters: his support has collapsed

Mr Peters's problems are beginning to rile Mr Bolger. Speaking after mounting strife within NZF, Mr Bolger said that the coalition had to be seen to be listening to the electorate, "which is very clearly saying, 'Stop the nonsense, get on with the job'".

The "nonsense" has persisted for some time. Quarrelling inside NZF came to a head late last month while Mr Peters was overseas. Neil Kirton accused a fellow NZF MP, cabinet minister Tuariki Delamere, of lying. He then crossed the floor of the House to vote with the opposition.

Mr Kirton has become something of a loose cannon since being sacked as associate health minister after a long-running dispute over privatisation with National's health minister, Bill English. He also claims there has been a cover-up over the winding-back of odometers in imported cars — an accusation rejected by Mr Delamere, who replaced him as Customs minister.

Tau Henare, Mr Peters's party deputy, added to the coalition's woes by breaking cabinet ranks over the case of a terminally ill 64-year-old man refused kidney dialysis. While Mr English said the issue was a decision for doctors to make, Mr Henare said it showed the whole system was faulty.

There is now mounting panic and mounting dissension. As Jenny Bloxham, who earlier resigned as NZF's vice-president, said in defence of the right of party MPs to speak out: "We are down to 1.9 per cent in the polls — what have we got to lose?"

Fifteen of NZF's 17 MPs are new to parliament, and they often appear lost. Tukoroirangi Morgan caused the first scandal, before the traditional honeymoon period for a new government had even begun. It was revealed that while working for a state-funded Maori television station before he became an MP, Mr Morgan spent NZ$4,000 in expenses on clothing, including $89 on a pair of boxer shorts. "Tuku's underpants" caused an uproar, and continue to flutter as an emblem of greed and ineptitude.

Some of his fellow Maori MPs have adopted a self-styled "warrior" approach to politics, and frightened the other half of Mr Peters's power base — the *pakeha* (white) pensioners. And Mr Peters himself got into an undignified fracas in a parliamentary corridor earlier this year with a redneck National party MP, John Banks.

Now Mr Peters's support in his flagship electorate of Tauranga has collapsed. His electorate campaign chairman, Roly Hammond, resigned in protest at the Maori MPs' "antics".

All this has rubbed off on the National party, which also has its own problems. Christine Fletcher, a minister outside cabinet, resigned last month and called for Mr Bolger's head. The main question now is when the coup will be staged.

All these ructions within government have deepened disenchantment with the new electoral system, known as Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). Voters chose it in reaction to the broken promises of Labour and National, who since 1984 have carried out a thorough-going Thatcherite reform of the economy.

Mr Peters, sacked from Mr Bolger's National cabinet in 1992, took his new party to power by campaigning against political treachery. He stands accused of the very same thing: before the election he vowed to "get rid" of the National party. He is now their coalition partner.

Defenders of MMP argue that the trouble lies not with the system but the country's politicians. Yet most voters cannot disentangle the two.

Now Mr Bolger, in a desperate attempt to shore up his crumbling administration, has launched a new rightwing initiative for further privatisation. It is "springtime" in New Zealand, he said this month, and time for renewal. For his government, however, there seems no end to the woes of winter.

The U'wa people of Colombia have a way of life devoted to keeping the planet alive. For them, the prospect of international oil companies drilling their land portends the end of the world. **John Vidal** reports

A tribe's suicide pact

THE U'wa are one of South America's more remote and mystical people. They have lived in the foothills and cloudforests of the Andes in northeast Colombia since, they believe, the world began, and had almost no contact with the outside world until 40 years ago. And in all that time, in all their immense oral history, there is no record of them ever having fought outsiders or each other, of them causing any pollution, or of them taking anything that was not always theirs. Yet now, this retiring, self-governing society, which believes that it exists only to keep the world in harmony, faces certain apocalypse because of the inroads made into their lands by British and United States oil companies.

To reach the small U'wa communities up in the mountains, you have to leave the Colombian plains, ford several rivers and then follow the tracks that lead up to the fields cleared from the forest 35 years ago by colonist farmers. There, you must wait for several days on the edge of the U'wa's territory, hoping to gain the trust of their spiritual leaders. If and when that trust is given, there is another long hike through bog, bush and jungle until you come to a near-vertical 500-metre escarpment cliff. You then follow the mountain streams up the cliff, led by machete and luminous blue, handkerchief-sized butterflies. Occasionally, the sun breaks through the canopy, but mostly there is no sense of a world beyond. Exhausted, scratched and bitten, you finally emerge at the top of the cliff. Clouds hang like smoke on the valley sides below. Behind you, the great Cobaria river snakes away to the Orinoco and the Amazon Basin; to the north is Venezuela and the ever-rising hills leading up to the Sierra Nevada de Cocuy and its snow-topped peaks.

In pre-colonial days, the U'wa ranged across an area the size of Wales; today, most of the few thousand people who remain have retreated to the mountains to preserve their culture in the face of incursions by white settlers. Their 100,000-hectare designated territory is just 10 per cent of their ancestral lands. It is a remote place, far from the cities, the drug and oil economies, and the guerrilla warfare that is now tearing lowland Colombia apart.

An old man, a string bag on his shoulder and with hands coloured orange from pulping fruit, beckons us from the edge of his banana patch and calls with a monkey yelp to his Spanish-speaking son, Betencaro. Betencaro is a tubby, Pan-like figure, with the softest of handshakes and the eagerness of a child. The 400m walk through the forest to his house takes an hour as he stops every few yards to show us his world. "This is what we eat," he says. He bends down, picks and strips a plant, exposes its heart and offers it. "Here is a plate" — he picks off a leaf, bends it four ways like macramé, and pierces the corners with a hard, spiky grass. "This root is a medicine for the stomach . . . Here, taste this, it's an anaesthetic" — it leaves my mouth numb within seconds. He calls to the birds and the frogs, and shows us where the aphrodisiacal honey comes from.

There is nothing in the forest that Betencaro and the U'wa do not use. These berries make soap; that fungus (he points to a tree) lights fires. He makes furniture with this creeper, bags from that. Here's a vine good for bow strings. This is where the *cuchi-cuchi* (monkeys) live; where the birds collect.

We eat bark and berry, root, tuber, bean, fruit and leaf. Betencaro is laughing his head off, beaming at his sufficiency. Everything in this cloudy Garden of Eden is useful to him. Except for one plant with a small white flower. "Hah," he says, tearing it up by the root and throwing it to the forest floor as if he were a National Trust gardener finding ground elder: "The Christians brought that. It promises everything, but it's useless."

We reach his house, which, like his father's, is surrounded by a chaos of coca bushes, bananas and fruit trees. Betencaro regrets that he cannot invite us in because, he says, we will upset the gods who determine his every action and thought. He would have to get a *wedhaiya* (U'wa spiritual leader) to breathe on our clothes, to purify us and to prevent our culture from contaminating his home. So we sit outside and talk of the one thing that is occupying U'wa minds. Oil.

One hundred and sixty kilometres to the east, where the Cobaria river spills first through the state of Arauca before moving on to a landlocked floodplain, is the Caño Limon oilfield. It is one of the world's largest, with more than 1,200 million barrels of oil, and it earns Colombia hundreds of millions of dollars a year. The oilfield is licensed to the US oil corporation Occidental (Oxy), which is in equal partnership with the Anglo-Dutch corporation, Shell. Ecopetrol, Colombia's state oil company, has a smaller share.

The diametrically opposed worlds of the U'wa and the petrol companies — of consumerism and mysticism, of corporations and the self-sufficient — are clashing terribly in South America, and especially in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, which are set to displace the Middle East as the preferred source of US oil.

Where the U'wa depend on the natural inaccessibility of their habitat to protect their culture, these oil companies protect their 5,000-hectare holding with 3m-high coils of razor wire and miles of steel fences. Oxy and Shell pay a "war tax" of $1 per barrel (about $180,000 a day) to pay for the protection of the Colombian army from the escalating guerrilla war.

At Caño Limon we are met by nervous-looking young men with machine guns who spend their days in concrete pillboxes or in a bullet-splattered guard post. Oxy representatives are waiting for us, too. Even so, it takes us half an hour and five radio and mobile telephone calls to pass through three sets of security gates into a manicured colonial compound that would do justice to Club Mediterranée. There are swimming pools, athletic tracks, tennis and racket courts, gymnasia, restaurants, a hospital, helicopter pads, shops. Everything must be brought in from outside to cater for the 150 oilworkers who live here for months at a stretch, not daring to leave for fear of being shot or kidnapped by the competing armies of guerrillas. It is like a war zone mixed with a holiday camp.

Photographs and images on the walls celebrate speed, power and, above all, the triumph of oil production and the companies' domination of nature. This river has been straightened, millions of tonnes of earth have been moved, lakes filled in, new ones formed. This is the great pipeline that crosses the mountains to export the oil.

AT THEIR current rate of output, Shell and Oxy have only about 10 years' exploitation left of the Caño Limon, and with the end in sight for this fabulously profitable field, they are searching for new sites. They have been licensed by the Colombian government to explore and exploit a large block of land called Samoré. The problem is that Samoré includes a sizeable part of the U'wa's existing, and much of their ancestral, territory.

The companies have already spent $16 million on seismic studies, which revealed that Samoré holds as much oil as Caño Limon. But for the U'wa, any incursion on to their territory would be devastating, and their response is categorical: if and when Shell and Oxy move in to their mountains, the tribal leaders say that many U'wa will throw themselves off a high cliff called The Cliff Of Death in an act of mass ritual suicide. For the U'wa, this would be a positive act — better to die with both dignity and culture intact, they say, than to see their world torn apart.

Mass ritual suicide is part of the U'wa culture. The tribe's oral history recounts how in the 16th century one large U'wa community, in retreat from the Spaniards, came to The Cliff Of Death. All U'wa territory is considered sacred, but there are some areas, the cliff included, where no one may go. U'wa history relates that, faced with being forced to move on to this forbidden land, the tribe put their children in clay pots and cast them off the cliff before leaping backwards after them. If the U'wa carry out their threat, they will go back to The Cliff Of Death.



An U'wa tribeswoman in the Colombian rainforest PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL SMITH

For the government, the U'wa's decision is a "philosophical dilemma" that is threatening to become an international incident, according to Rodrigo Villamizar, the disgraced former minister of mines and petrol who resigned in August following a corruption scandal. James Niehaus, vice-president of Oxy Worldwide Production in California, calls it "tragic". The U'wa say it would be the end of the world, and the people of Colombia are horrified. On a recent trip to London, Villamizar said, "My son asks me, 'Daddy, are you going to make the Indians jump off the cliff?'."

Colombia's constitution requires it to protect its 84 tribes of indigenous peoples, but the country has an equal duty to develop its resources for the benefit of all. The circle is impossible to square because the U'wa do not want financial recompense, development or anything that the state or the neo-liberal economy can offer. They want to be left alone, like the Kogui tribe in the north of the country, which has withdrawn from all contact with white society. The U'wa way of life is not negotiable, they say. It is the ultimate peaceful protest.

But there are billions of dollars at stake, and oil is now Colombia's main export. The U'wa are semi-autonomous, and their lands are protected, but they do not own the mineral rights. Colombia's highest constitutional court ruled in February that Occidental and the government were guilty of violating the fundamental right of consultation with the U'wa, and were threatening their ethnic, cultural, social and economic identity. Within weeks, however, the higher administrative court effectively overruled this verdict and reinstated the Oxy/Shell mining permit. The current legal position is that the Samoré oilfield can now be developed whenever Shell and Oxy decide to move in. The result is a tense political stand-off, with the companies and the government believing that they can still persuade the U'wa to accept oil development on their land.

"No one has encountered a case like this before," says Eduardo Munoz-Gomez, minister in the Colombian embassy in London. "We can't afford one person committing suicide."

Oxy's stance is more hardline. The suicide threat is little more than a gesture, "a threat", says Gerardo Vargas, an Oxy community-relations officer in Arauca. Besides, says the corporation, there is no written evidence of the U'wa suicides in the 16th century. "The U'wa are not going to jump," says Vargas. "I will commit suicide myself first. I know them. Suicide is not the philosophy of the U'wa. They have allowed themselves to get cornered. One of the problems of their culture is that they do not agree amongst themselves. Everyone is completely individualistic."

But who, exactly, has Oxy been talking to? Vargas claims that the corporation has been in continual "negotiation" and "talks" with the U'wa since the application was made in 1985. The U'wa, he says, were on the point of signing an agreement as late as 1993. He calls them his friends.

The reality is that Oxy has talked to only one small, geographically isolated U'wa group on a consistent basis, and all of them are more or less integrated with white society, if living in poverty. The corporation has talked to no spiritual leaders and has never visited the main U'wa communities or power centres. Only five people in a community of several thousand seem prepared to say that they want the oil to come. All five have connections with Oxy. Only one of them speaks U'wa, and four live in towns.

In May, these five were the "U'wa community representatives" at a meeting in Bogotá to discuss the situation with a group of senators. Also there were senior Oxy executives, a government-paid anthropologist, the president of the state oil company Ecopetrol and three state ministers — of mines, interior and environment. The five "U'wa representatives" signed a document stating that they were in favour of oil exploitation with certain provisions: protection of the environment, social programmes and "sustainable development".

When pressed recently, however, one said that she is "not exactly" in favour of oil exploitation on U'wa land. She sees herself as someone trying to find a solution and avoid conflict.

Only one or two outsiders have ever been given full access to the main U'wa communities and the wedhaiya. Ann Osborn, an Oxford university anthropologist, went to live in Colombia in 1958 when she was in her early

continued on page 9

'Oil companies have always got what they wanted by taking advantage of others' weaknesses. This time it is not working'

Continued from page 8

twenties and spent more than 10 years with the U'wa in the 1970s and 1980s, and helped in the tribe's fight to secure its territory.

Osborn died in 1988, but her life's work is two books describing a complex, mystical society rooted in ritual and myth, and led by the purest in the tribe, the elected wedhaiya. The U'wa, says Osborn, attach a spiritual value to everything. They believe that they are the centre of a living earth and that they perpetuate all life by protecting it. Echoing James Lovelock's Gaia theory and radical science that proposes that the earth is holistically a living organism, the U'wa say everything — from land, tree and rock to river, sky and place — is alive and therefore sacred.

The U'wa protect the land not just in the strict environmental sense that they never waste, pollute or take more than the land can bear, but also in ritual chant and dance. Rather as the Australian Aboriginals have their songlines, so the U'wa daily sing the world into creation by reciting their myths and their place names. They keep the world alive by, literally, singing it. The birds, too, create places by chanting the names of the areas they fly over. Everything, said Osborn, that the U'wa do or think is focused to "protect and continue life".

OSBORN describes a world bound by its environment. The traditional U'wa still practise swidden agriculture, moving up from the lower slopes to higher ones according to the season. Their many different myths are performed seasonally, accompanied by rituals led by the wedhaiya. Although the tribe has barely enough land for everyone in the reservation, it is largely an unchanging world, in stark contrast to what U'wa leaders refer to as the "ever-changing" nature of white society.

And as part of their cosmology, the U'wa world above is mirrored below the earth. In this inverted universe live shadow people, alter egos of those living on the surface. Here in the underworld, the sun rises in the west and sets in the east. "In psychological terms," wrote Osborn, "this relates with the world of the psyche and the different levels of the conscious and unconscious."

The sense of mystery is everywhere. On reaching puberty, young U'wa women put on head-dresses, or cocaras, made of giant leaves from which they can see only through a small slit in the front. They wear them until someone asks to marry them, which can take four or more years. Then there are the 12 menhirs, great standing stones like those at Stonehenge, which Osborn believed were the pillars of the U'wa's spiritual world. U'wa myth says that when the last one falls, the world ends. Only two still stand.

But what about oil? Osborn doesn't mention it, but the U'wa say they have always had a word for it — *ruiria*. "For them, it is the blood of Mother Earth, the veins of the land," says Edgar Mendez, an anthropologist who has worked with the U'wa for two years. "The invasion of another world into their territory — above or below ground — is death. To extract it would tear their spiritual world apart."

We return from the mountains, stumbling in the dark, having barely been granted access to the U'wa's main communities. Pepé, a semi-pet coypu, is being grilled over wood by a lowland U'wa family that farms an old colonist ranch. Berichá Kubar'uwa, president of the traditional U'wa council, swings in a hammock with a child. In his pocket, he has a "clock" insect that whistles on the U'wa hour. "We had lots of hours before the Spanish came," he quips.



Berichá is weary. "The communities will die," he sighs. "We can't give permission to develop oil. You can't sell Mother Moon. We don't even sell our timber or cattle, so why would we want to try to sell the blood of Mother Earth? For us, the earth is sacred: it is not for violation, exploitation or negotiation; it is to be cared for, to be conserved. The government will sit down with us to see how we can live with Oxy and their oil exploration in our territory, without our culture being destroyed. But for us, this is impossible. We believe that the sun and the moon only work with the earth because she has blood.

If you take out the blood, then you damage the earth and cause imbalance."

Earlier this year, Berichá and Mendez were flown to California by a small US environmental group to confront top Oxy executives at their headquarters. Berichá sat on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, studied it for many hours, and then searched and sang his traditional songs to understand what his history had to say. He told the oilmen how the earth is connected to the sun and the moon. There is no sense that they understood.

The U'wa believe that they are doomed because to extract the oil would be to drain the earth of its blood. They are prepared to die for their beliefs, but they are also increasingly aware that, in cold, practical terms, the effective end of their tribe is more likely be caused by the guerrilla warfare that accompanies the oil industry in Colombia. They will have no earthly way of defending themselves.

On July 1, war nearly came to the U'wa living in the small community of Casa Roja. At 9am, a column of 30 armed men came up the track, the first guerrillas seen in the area. A military patrol was waiting for them. Two people died in a brief firefight that ended when a plane dropped four bombs within metres of the houses. An U'wa villager, Yaquie, shows us the bullet holes in three of her walls. "If oil comes, there will be more of this," she says. "It is inevitable. We will die."

Yaquie and the other U'wa base their fears on what has happened in other oilfields, especially the Caño Limon field. A recent report — prepared by local unions, churches, indigenous and human-rights groups — documents the reality of life in the Caño Limon since oil was exploited. Just 15 years ago, this was a sleepy, under-populated frontier land, but the oilfield attracted tens of thousands of displaced people, who flooded into the area in search of work. With them came two full mobile brigades of the Colombian army, paid for by Shell and Oxy, who are accused of atrocities by Amnesty International and Colombian human-rights groups.

Oil has also attracted, like flies to the ointment, the well-armed ELN and FARC, Colombia's two main guerrilla groups. Also in the area are shadowy, pro-government paramilitary death squads paid for unofficially by the military or the police. An estimated 6,000 people in Arauca now survive by murder, kidnapping and extortion.

The militarisation of the area has developed into a feudal war. Government records note that, in the past year, there have been 38 assassinations, 18 massacres, 31 incidents of torture, 44 kidnappings, 151 illegal detentions, 360 incidents of harassment, 150 displacements of people, and one disappearance. A judicial investigation documents further murders, illegal detentions and human rights abuses. Few believe these figures cover even half the atrocities that have taken place.

THE government, the oil companies and the local authorities say the war is escalating. The 600km oil pipeline — paid for by Shell and Oxy and operated by Ecopetrol — that starts in Caño Limon and takes more than half of Colombia's oil to the Caribbean coast has been bombed and mined 473 times since it was completed in 1986. There were 47 attacks in the first six months of 1997 alone. The 1.5 million barrels of oil spilt in the bombings have caused "irreparable pollution" to the environment, says Oxy. Put together, they constitute the sixth-largest oil spill in history. Many oil workers have been killed. Ominously, says the company, the ELN and FARC are now working together against them.

The ecological and social situation is disturbing, too. Local unions and churches have documented the side-effects of oil exploitation in the region. These include invasion of land, pollution of the air, rivers and soil, the loss of sacred lakes, birdlife, land degradation and climatic changes. With these ecological problems have come social disintegration — prostitution, drugs, alcoholism, malnutrition, delinquency and divisions in society. The nomadic Guahibos, the only indigenous group living in the area when the oilmen came, have been reduced to begging.

"Life was tranquil before the oil," says the report, which was carried out on the U'wa's behalf. "Today . . . people are forgetting the basic principles of togetherness and are unable to adapt . . . With the contamination of the land has come cultural and spiritual contamination."

This puts Oxy in a dilemma. While it needs to keep the international community and the global financial markets abreast of production delays and problems with the guerrillas, it has to present a different face to the Colombian people when asked if it will bring a similar destabilisation of society in Samoré, and especially U'wa territory, if it begins oil production there. Rather than accept any responsibility for the chaos, Oxy claims to be a "good neighbour", and points to the social and financial initiatives it has designed to help local communities. The corporation says that in Caño Limon it has paid $100 million of taxes to the local government in the past 12 years. Oxy is reticent about what will happen to the region when the oil runs out.

Rather than accept that their presence has been responsible for the militarisation of the region, Oxy and Shell blame the guerrillas for the plight of the U'wa. "The U'wa are virtually hostages in their own land, controlled by groups engaged in illegal and murderous acts, including drug and gun trafficking," says Niehaus, Oxy's vice-president. "As a result, they are prevented from making decisions about their future without interference and intimidation — decisions that could make the difference between survival and the extinction of their community." The U'wa reply that they have had no contact with the guerrillas and that they mostly support their struggle. The guerrillas, they say, target the oil companies, not them.

So does Oxy accept that the same social and ecological disasters will take place in Samoré if they and Shell start production? With all the logic of a massive corporation in California, Niehaus says that the U'wa need Oxy and oil. Without the development that the companies will bring, he claims, the U'wa are doomed: "Young people will continue to leave the area to seek opportunities elsewhere, and the communities will not be able to continue their traditional way of life. The simple fact is that U'wa society is changing as a result of complex socio-economic factors that have nothing to do with oil development."

The neo-liberal government still cannot believe that the U'wa will carry out their threats, or that the oil development will be stopped.

Nevertheless, Oxy now suggests it may be able to extract oil without going into U'wa lands, by using advanced technologies to drill horizontally from the side. The U'wa are not impressed, and have raised the stakes by saying that they will now commit suicide if any oil is taken out of their ancestral territory. They are now seeking to have their lands extended.

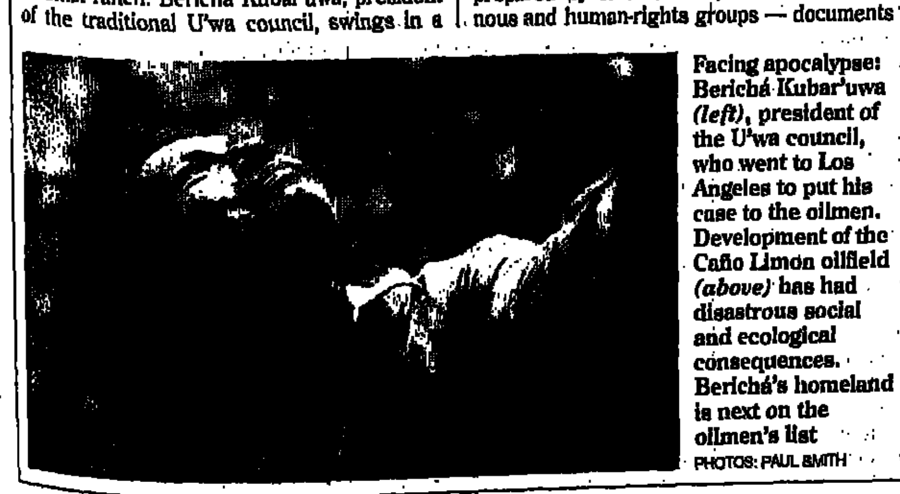
For Oxy and Shell, it must all be rather confusing. In the can-do global economy of oil and international diplomacy, everyone they have encountered so far has had a price; everything can be negotiated and every situation mediated. The U'wa's position questions their whole presence and exposes their flaws. "They talk a different language and speak from another world," says Mendez.

"The companies talk about social responsibility, but they refuse to accept responsibility for the impact of their work," says Martin von Hildebrand, Colombia's former environment minister who framed the constitutional laws to protect indigenous people's rights in 1991 and who now works with the Gaia Foundation in Bogotá. "Everywhere else, from South America to Africa, they have got what they wanted by taking advantage of the weakness of institutions, playing one group off against another, dividing people, working on the young, and offering gifts. This time, it is not working."

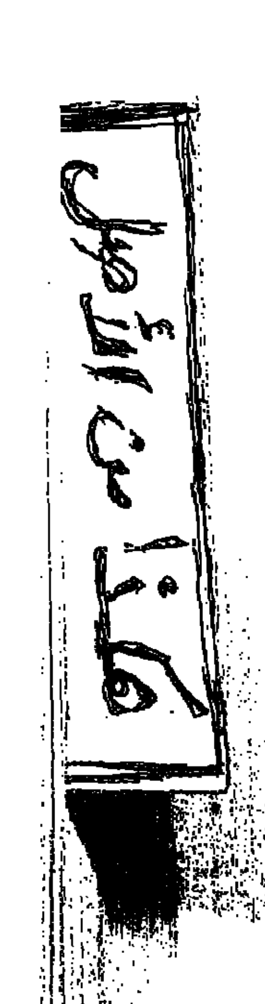
Yesterday's mirrors and beads have become today's roads, health and education centres, says Von Hildebrand. The U'wa are adamant they would prefer to die in dignity rather than lose their identity and their purpose, which is to keep the world alive. Where the whole of Colombian society is being destabilised by the rush to embrace a global economy, they pose unanswerable questions.

The hot afternoon rain pours down in Casa Roja. D, the daughter of a wedhaiya who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, says that the situation is confusing and dangerous. Are there not simple truths and laws that exist for everyone and everything, she asks. Fundamental laws that cannot be changed on the whim of men in Los Angeles, London or Bogotá?

"I sing the traditional songs to my children," she says. "I teach them that everything is sacred and linked. How can I tell Shell and Oxy that to take the petrol is for us worse than killing your own mother? If you kill the earth, then no one will live. I do not want to die. Nobody does. No, it is not a gesture."



Facing apocalypse: Berichá Kubar'uwa *(left)*, president of the U'wa council, who went to Los Angeles to put his case to the oilmen. Development of the Caño Limon oilfield *(above)* has had disastrous social and ecological consequences. Berichá's homeland is next on the oilmen's list PHOTOS: PAUL SMITH



The Week in Britain James Lewis

Hague is most unpopular Tory leader this century

THE CONSERVATIVE party conference in Blackpool this week was supposed to signal the start of a fight-back after the biggest political defeat this century. Its new leader, the 36-year-old William Hague, insisted that the Tories were "back in business and off their knees", but there was precious little supporting evidence.

An opinion poll dented Mr Hague's credibility by showing support for the Tories to be at an all-time low of 22 points (support for Tony Blair's New Labour has risen by 16 points since the general election) and suggesting that only 6 per cent think he would make the best prime minister — the lowest rating ever given to a new leader.

Michael Heseltine, always a star turn at Tory conferences, chose to stay away. He no longer has leadership ambitions. Other Tory heavies — Baroness Thatcher, Lord Parkinson and John Major — bravely rallied around the new leader, but the former Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, gave a sharp reminder that internal divisions over Europe are as deep as ever. Mr Clarke held open the possibility of early entry to a single European currency, though the stance of the new shadow cabinet is firmly against joining and during the Tory leadership contest Mr Hague ruled out entry for the next 10 years. Tory backbench MPs will be allowed a free vote if the issue arises.

Following a crude ballot of party members to endorse his leadership, Mr Hague was expected to push through far-reaching changes to the party's structure. The Conservative party does not actually exist as a legal entity, so he proposes to combine its autonomous parts — MPs, Central Office and the National Union — into a single body with a governing board. This would aim to increase grassroots membership from about 300,000 now to 1 million by the turn of the century.

In response to the tide of sleaze which helped to undermine John Major's administration, the new leadership will have the right to expel or suspend MPs or members who bring the party into disrepute. Constituency toilers will also be given a say — indirectly, through an electoral college — in the choice of a future leader.

From such beginnings Mr Hague — variously known as Hague the Vague and Billy the Kid — hopes to re-create a credible political force.



BRIGHTON'S gathering of the Labour party was ruthlessly stage-managed from start to finish, but not quite rigorously enough to tame the ebullient Minister for Sport, Tony Banks, who entertained his audience at a leftwing fringe meeting by saying the Tories had "elected a foetus as leader". He added, for good measure: "I bet a lot of them now wish they had not voted against abortion."

After incurring the wrath of pro-life groups and the displeasure of the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, Mr Banks apologised for what he admitted was a tasteless remark, made off the cuff. His ministerial job was said to be safe for the time being.

Mr Banks had some fun, at the same meeting, over the discomfiture of Peter Mandelson, Mr Blair's closest confidant, who failed to win a place on Labour's National Executive Committee. He said: "It's not nice to kick a man when he's down — but it's safer, isn't it?"

Labour conference, page 12

ANDREW MORTON came under attack from several quarters for publishing Diana: Her True Story In Her Own Words — an updated version of a book published in 1992 which, he said then, had been based on information gleaned from the princess's friends. The latest book contains an 18,000-word transcript of recordings made by the princess and an admission that it was she who had provided the evidence for the original volume through a doctor friend.

Diana's executors talked of seeking an injunction to ban the book on the grounds that Mr Morton did not own the copyright on the recorded words. The princess's brother, Earl Spencer, also threatened legal action, but the publishers went ahead, and the book sold briskly.

Comment, page 14

POLICE forces in England and Wales reported that high-calibre handguns, which became illegal after Tuesday last week, had mostly been handed in by their owners. The Home Office will now meet compensation claims that are expected to total around £500 million. The owner of one diamond-encrusted Smith and Wesson pistol surrendered in Sussex will be claiming £65,000.

Nearly all the collected guns will be melted down except for a few weapons of historical interest, which will be offered to museums.

THE FIRST authorised boxing match between British women was called off after protests over the two 13-year-olds who were due to fight at a nightclub in Stoke-on-Trent.

Emma Brammer withdrew hours before she was due to meet Andrea Prime in the ring. She blamed hostile media reaction to the proposed bout, but the two girls say they will meet at a secret venue to stage their contest in private.

The Amateur Boxing Association has just changed its rules to allow competitive fights between women. Previously they had been allowed only to spar.

Blair to emphasise human rights

Ian Black

IN A defiant gesture underlining Britain's commitment to human rights and democracy in Africa, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has issued a personal invitation to the ousted president of Sierra Leone to attend this month's Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh.

Mr Blair, chairing the biennial meeting on October 24, will also be in the chair when the Queen makes an unprecedented speech to the opening session in the city's international conference centre.

In the past, the Queen, the Head of the Commonwealth, has stayed deliberately behind the scenes, hosting a banquet for leaders but avoiding any public involvement.

Mr Blair's invitation to President Ahmed Kabbah as "a special guest" under Commonwealth rules is a deliberate attempt by Britain to sharpen the organisation's much-heralded respect for human rights and democracy.

Under the terms of the 1991 Harare Declaration committing Commonwealth members to an agenda of human rights and democracy — by which Nigeria was suspended at the last summit in Auckland for hanging Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists — Sierra Leone was suspended from "the councils of the Commonwealth" after the president was ousted in May's military coup.

Britain has refused to recognise the junta and continues to treat Mr Kabbah as the democratically elected head of state. Mr Blair's invitation allows him to attend as head of the Sierra Leone delegation.

"It can only do good to the Commonwealth and Britain," said one official at the organisation's London headquarters. "If the elected president is replaced by a gaggle of soldiers and we do nothing, no one will take us seriously."

Commonwealth supporters welcomed the move. "It's a signal from the Government that they really are pursuing a human rights-oriented policy and underlines the fact that Britain doesn't like military coups any more," said one.

Last week, Mr Kabbah addressed the United Nations general assembly and issued a "desperate appeal" to the international community to "save a nation".

Few other surprises are expected in Edinburgh, with broad agreement that Nigeria will remain suspended rather than face expulsion.

Dirty tactics . . . environmental activists covered themselves in mud during a mass trespass in protest of a planned expansion of Durnford limestone quarry near Bristol

PHOTOGRAPH: TOBY MELVILLE

Police announce youth curfew

THE Strathclyde police force is set to become the first in Britain to impose a dusk-to-dawn curfew on under-16s. Senior officers said last week that a pilot scheme in Lanarkshire later his month will be extended if it is successful, *writes John Arlidge*.

Children in Hamilton, 10 miles east of Glasgow, will be banned from the streets after dark and early in the morning unless they have a "reasonable excuse" to be out. The rules will apply to children playing football, walking in a park or meeting friends in the town centre.

Officers will question children and will be given powers to escort them home or take them to the local police station to be collected by their parents. Social workers may be informed. The move has been condemned as "heavy-handed and draconian" by civil liberties campaigners.

Police in Kent and parts of London have imposed curfews on problem housing estates, but Strathclyde is the first to order youngsters off the streets throughout a town. Local officers say the move is designed to protect children and to address public fears of violence and harassment.

The Government said the move was "a welcome step forward" which mirrored policy-making on youth crime south of the border.

Henry McLeish, the Scottish Office home affairs minister, said: "The curfew will mean that people on the streets who are going to create mischief will be dealt with and vulnerable young people protected."

But Alan Miller, of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, said: "The people and Parliament have not yet given the police power to deprive people of their liberties in this way."

Rules eased to oust bad teachers

Rebecca Smithers

TEACHERS' organisations, employers, churches and school governors have unanimously agreed new fast-track disciplinary rules for the profession which in extreme cases will lead to incompetent teachers being dismissed in just one month.

Under outline "capability procedures" published last week by Acas the independent arbitration service, most teachers found to be incompetent will be given two terms — six months — to show an improvement before being handed their notice.

Unions retracted their opposition to an earlier government proposal that in cases where pupils' education is being jeopardised, teachers should be given only four weeks to improve.

They were, however, privately claiming a moral victory by getting a new category of "gross incompetence" struck out of the document.

The report will now be submitted to the schools standards minister, Stephen Byers, who in July asked the working group of school representatives from the churches, governors, the national employers' body and the six teachers' organisations to draw up an outline structure.

The unions, which have complained bitterly about the Government's constant attacks on "failing" teachers, welcomed the agreement as likely to boost morale by triggering the expulsion of a small but troublesome group.

Peter Smith, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said: "While there remains a public perception that there is a problem with incompetent teachers who are impossible to remove from their posts, the whole of the profession is tainted. There must be a humane but efficient procedure for supporting and training those who can be helped to improve and for dismissing those who do not."

● The Teacher Training Agency is to launch a national campaign to recruit teachers and give the profession a positive image in response to a worsening crisis as student numbers rise and applications for teacher training fall. A £1.5 million advertising budget will spread the message: "No one forgets a good teacher."

In Brief

SIR Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, made an outspoken attack on police corruption in which he said there is a "significant number" of criminals serving in his 27,000-member force.

APPROXIMATELY 30,000 women became pregnant because of the "pill scare" two years ago when women were warned that some oral contraceptives carried an increased risk of blood closts, according to new research. More than 10,000 of the "extra" pregnancies ended in abortion.

THE tour operator Sun Tours collapsed, leaving 8,000 British holidaymakers stranded, most of them in Turkey.

MICHAEL MAVOR, chairman of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference which represents leading independent schools, called for the abolition of GCSE exams which were, he said, providing pupils with an "inadequate preparation" for advanced study.

SCHOOLS are failing to tackle the increasing problem of violence by pupils, according to a report by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. It found that pupils carry dangerous weapons at one in 10 schools and that teachers often fail to report being assaulted because they fear retaliation.

A QUARTER OF all secondary school pupils in England and a third of those in Scotland have tried to buy cigarettes in the past year, according to a report by the Office of National Statistics. The survey found that 13 per cent of 11- to 15-year-olds are regular smokers.

LOUISE WOODWARD, aged 19, went on trial in the United States charged with the murder of a nine-month-old baby in her care while she worked as a nanny for the baby's parents.

THE Government faces a bill of more than £100 million in damages for a miner's condition known as "dead man's fingers" after the High Court in Newcastle awarded £127,000 to seven former pit men in a test case.

TREVOR REES-JONES, the sole survivor of the crash that killed Diana, Princess of Wales, Dodi Al Fayed and their driver, Henri Paul, left hospital in Paris and flew home to Britain.

MARKS & SPENCER supermarkets have stopped stocking battery-farmed eggs in response to increasing consumer demand for free-range food products.

THE historian and poet A L Rowse has died aged 94.

Sinn Fein: 'We aim to smash the Union'

John Mullin in Belfast

MARTIN McGUINNESS, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, raised the political temperature surrounding this week's multi-party talks on Northern Ireland's future, with a blistering speech last Sunday making it clear that republicans were aiming to "smash the Union".

The uncompromising language of his speech, at a rally in the nationalist heartland of Coalisland, County Tyrone, will worry the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam. It says republicans will settle for nothing less than Irish unity, and so effectively dims the prospect of an agreed settlement arising from the talks at Stormont.

The Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, had offered some hope that Sinn Fein might sell to its supporters a devolved assembly and cross-border institutions as an interim step to the end of the Union.

Mr McGuinness left little room for such manoeuvring. He called for an end to "fancy footwork" and said Sinn Fein would repudiate attempts to "set all sorts of constraints" to the discussions. Unionists were wrong to suggest that Sinn Fein's participation meant a tacit recognition of partition, he said.

"I think [Ulster Unionist party leader] David Trimble should be made aware that we have not struggled for 27 years against the might of the British government and the British military forces to take a step towards consolidating partition of the island.

"Sinn Fein is not going to the negotiating table to strengthen the Union. We are going into the negotiating table to smash the Union."

Sinn Fein has spent months talking more moderately in an effort to secure the Unionists' presence at the talks. But in his speech Mr McGuinness suggested that they were a side show.

"The key player we have to negotiate with is the Government. We are bringing a message to them that it's time for British rule to end. That is Tony Blair's big job."

While there is little doubt Mr McGuinness's robust language was partly designed to please his audience, it was also aimed at all the talks' participants. It is a marked departure from recent Sinn Fein language.

Mr Adams released a statement which chimed with Mr McGuinness's speech, though its style was more muted.

Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionists' security spokesman, rejected Mr McGuinness's analysis. "The position of any group within the Union is open to discussion. But the Union itself is not on the table," he said.

Sinn Fein may simply be taking advantage of the absence of Mr Trimble and his deputy, John Taylor, who are in Washington for a series of meetings, to play its toughest negotiating hand yet. But it will be difficult for Mr McGuinness to row back on such a robust espousal of Irish unity. He is ruling out compromise.

Preacher who forgot his tambourine

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

TONY BLAIR walked on to the music of Saint-Saëns, specifically the part used as the theme of Babe. This is the popular film about a shy talking piglet who learns to round up flocks of docile, disciplined sheep. Just a coincidence, of course.

The same tune was the last music played at Princess Diana's funeral, but I should think that was a coincidence too. Almost certainly.

We had just seen a video depicting Five Months of Glorious Progress. Election promises honoured! Blair Triumphs in Amsterdam! Ragged cheers greeted these heroic declarations, reminding us that New Labour has always had trouble distinguishing between a decision and an achievement.

The Prime Minister walked briskly on stage. The audience rose to him in a standing ovation which turned out, perhaps, to be slightly more enthusiastic than the one at the end.

It was not so much a speech as a presentation; the audience was like an evangelical congregation who wanted to be writhing on the floor in ecstasy, but found that they had a Church of England vicar who didn't even have a tambourine.

By the end, when he was talking about the importance of giving: "Make this the giving age . . ." he sounded as if he was wrapping up the harvest festival. "And I say this to you — vegetable marrows at the back, please." Of course the conference realised they weren't being offered very much in exchange for their giving. He used the phrase "hard choices" or "harsh choices" 11 times, and in the past this has always been Labour government code for "no more money".

So it is today. But under Mr Blair, harshness is also a virtue in itself. "The high ideal of the best schools in the world. Reached through hard choices," he said. (Once again, few verbs. But slightly more this year. Nevertheless, 97 verb-free sentences.)

"It must be a compassionate society. But it is compassion with a hard edge because a strong society cannot be built on soft choices."

Compassion with a hard edge! The razor blade in the duvet!

As well as being hard, we must be modern. To be modern is an absolute good in itself, and he used the word 21 times.

There were curious phrases. "The gates of xenophobia falling down", almost Blakean. There was the description of his mood when he won the election and we, the people, called on him to lead us into a new century. "That was your challenge to me. Proudly, humbly, I accepted it."

Vainly, modestly, he set to *work.* Harshly, *compassionately,* he took the tough choices. *Loudly,* softly, he spoke to conference, and fascinated, bored, the audience gave him a standing ovation anyway.



The International Development Secretary, Clare Short, took one of the more dangerous steps of her political career on Brighton beach by donning body armour similar to that worn by Diana, Princess of Wales in Angola to publicise the threat of land-mines. *Comment, page 14* PHOTOGRAPH: FIONA HANSON

Blair calls for a 'giving age'

Michael White

TONY BLAIR used his leader's speech to the Labour party conference in Brighton last week to make a high-minded appeal to the British people to cast aside the cynicism and mediocrity of the post-war era and join a selfless national renewal under the banner of "the giving age".

In his first conference speech as prime minister he promised and warned voters that they had elected "a government of high ideals and hard choices". It would push through the changes needed to turn Britain into "a model 21st century nation, a beacon to the world".

"Modernisation is not an end in itself: it is for a purpose. Modernisation is not the enemy of justice, but its ally. Progress and justice are the two rocks upon which the New Britain is raised to the heights," Mr Blair told 2,000 people in the Brighton Centre and the far wider TV audience — to whom much of his speech was addressed.

There was a tough economic message beneath the surface of his 6,000-word text, coupled with a social conservatism that elevated discipline and duty, denounced industrial conflict — "partnership is the key" — and elevated family life.

The aim was for a compassionate society. "But it is compassion with a hard edge because a strong society cannot be built on soft choices."

Mr Blair spoke of a huge social problem in re-establishing family life as the bedrock of society. He said: "Attitudes have changed. The world has changed. But I am a modern man leading a modern country and this is a modern crisis."

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will chair a new ministerial committee to strengthen the family, and the radical plans of the Social Security Minister, Frank Field, for ending welfare dependency and curbing state involvement in pensions — the subject of growing tension in Whitehall — will produce a green paper before Christmas. "The new welfare state must encourage work, not dependency," Mr Blair warned.

Mr Blair's determination that a Labour government will serve two full terms shone through the speech. He again warned against complacency — and revealed an agenda much bigger than a celebration of Labour's 179-seat Commons majority.

The Prime Minister, lavishly praising "the richness of the British character" in his opening passage, called it "creative, compassionate, outward-looking. Old British values, but a new British confidence. We can never be the biggest, we may never again be the mightiest. But we can be the best."

There were also hard nuggets of policy development in the hour-long performance. Mr Blair rattled off a list of reforms which his ministers had either set in train or implemented since election day — ranging from the handgun ban and devolution to tax changes and the Northern Ireland peace process.

He also announced new initiatives, including a target of 500,000 more people in higher and further education by 2002 and more low-cost access to the Internet for schoolchildren.

As the Prime Minister moved towards his peroration he linked Labour values with "the best of British values" and called on the entire country to make a supreme national effort to help modernise it.

For a party leader who had just won an historic landslide, Mr Blair's speech was notably light on triumphalism, but it was heavy on high-minded ambition, almost religious in tone and decidedly low-key.

Hugo Young, page 14
Washington Post, page 16

Minister wins fees battle

The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, won overwhelming support from delegates at the Labour conference for the Government's plans to charge means-tested tuition fees for full-time undergraduates from September 1998. A threatened constituency rebellion failed to materialise.

Cash to clear land-mines

Ministers unveiled policy initiatives designed to help rid the world of land-mines during a debate on the scope of Labour's ethical foreign policy. The Defence Secretary, George Robertson, announced the creation of a mines information and training centre, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said they would double the sums available for global mine clearance to £10 million a year.

Ulster arrest powers curbed

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, vowed to end a "legacy of unfairness and injustice" when she announced a new bill that will scrap the controversial power of internment, reviled by Northern Ireland's nationalist community.

Mandelson in low pay row

Trade unions reacted in fury to a suggestion by the Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, that there would be a lower minimum wage for young workers, pre-empting recommendations by the Government's Low Pay Commission, which is due to report next spring.

Prescott alters rail sale rules

Parts of the rail network could be returned to public ownership, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, told delegates. In a move that sidelined calls for a return to full nationalisation, Mr Prescott tore up rules that excluded the public sector from running passenger railway services.

Hint of more cash for NHS

Tony Blair hinted that the Government will find more money for the National Health Service to stave off a winter beds crisis. His comments came in the wake of a warning by doctors that patients may have to pay to see their GP in the light of Labour's determination not to raise income tax to improve NHS funding.

Straw acts to stamp out racist crimes

Alan Travis

JUDGES will be given the power to pass heavier sentences for any crime which has a racial element under detailed proposals unveiled at the conference by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary.

His announcement goes further than the Government's manifesto commitment to give judges the power to add up to two years in prison to the sentences of those convicted of racially motivated violence or harassment.

Mr Straw said wider powers were needed because racist crimes, such as the killing of south London teenager Stephen Lawrence in April 1993, were among the most despicable offences.

"Those who commit racist crimes should expect severe punishment. Where there is a racialist element then conviction should always attract a higher and more severe penalty," he said.

Details of the new offences, published in a Home Office consultation document last week, indicate that the Crime and Disorder Bill will contain these wider powers.

It says the courts should treat a racial element as an aggravating factor in sentencing and judges must state how they have taken it into account. Longer sentences will be imposed for crimes including burglary if the prosecution can demonstrate there was a racist motive.

The Home Office says the number of racial incidents reported to the police has risen from 4,383 in 1988 when separate statistics were first collected, to 12,222 in the 12 months preceding March 1996.

A study by the Crown Prosecution Service shows that in only 20 per cent of convictions for racially-motivated crimes do the courts impose a heavier sentence.

The Home Office consultation paper acknowledges that it has been difficult for prosecutors to prove that a specific assault was racially motivated. Mr Straw proposes that in future the prosecution will be asked to pass "a much more realistic test" and show that the "offenders demonstrated racial hostility at or around the time of the basic offence, or that a motivation for committing that offence was racial hostility".

This lesser standard of proof may include wearing British National Party insignia or shouting racial abuse at the time of the incident.

Mr Straw also announced plans to encourage magistrates to allow victims into youth courts so that teenage offenders can be confronted with the human consequences of their crime.

He told the Labour conference he would change the way in which the youth courts operated: "They have become a Secret Garden — the names of offenders never published; the press hamstrung to report anything at all; even the victim excluded — not allowed into court, except as a witness.

"This system should be there to work for the victim and the public. We must afford much more dignity to the victims of crime, and give them a chance to see justice dispensed on their behalf."

A much more fundamental shake-up of the youth courts system will be announced in the next few weeks.

Mr Straw's promise to ensure that Labour remained the party of law and order was warmly received by delegates. He said his "zero tolerance" strategy included domestic violence as well as crime and disorder on the streets.

Gays win historic pay ruling

Clare Dyer

HOMOSEXUALS scored an historic victory at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg last week, in a test case over the denial of job perks to same-sex partners.

In a preliminary opinion, advocate general Michael Elmer held that South West Trains Ltd's denial of travel concessions to the woman partner of Lisa Grant, a ticket clerk, breached European law guaranteeing equal pay.

The case has far-reaching implications for employment rights in Britain. If the full court follows the opinion (which it does in four out of five cases), employers will have to offer same-sex partners the same perks, including pension benefits, available to unmarried partners of the opposite sex. Pay includes any benefits in cash or kind provided by an employer.

Ruth Harvey, Ms Grant's solicitor, said companies would have to look at all aspects of pay — salary, pensions, loans, mortgages and benefits — or risk claims against them.

However, the ruling could lead employers to limit perks to married partners. The advocate general held that this would not be contrary to European Union law. Nor would it be unlawful under English law.

Ms Grant, aged 38, who lives in Southampton with her partner Jillian Percey, a nurse aged 30, went to an industrial tribunal after she was refused concessions worth £1,000 a year for Ms Percey. Her predecessor in the job had received free and cut-price travel for his unmarried female partner.

The case was referred by the tribunal to the European Court where Ms Grant, represented by Cherie Booth QC, claimed the refusal breached article 119 of the EC treaty, which guarantees equal pay. After a definitive ruling by the court, the case will go back to the tribunal for a final decision in about six months.

The advocate general said that discrimination could not be justified on the basis that an employer wanted to benefit heterosexual but not homosexual couples. He also ruled that article 119 could be directly applied by courts and tribunals in Britain; if the full court agrees, this opens the way for tribunals to decide similar cases without reference to Europe.

Ms Percy said afterwards: "We're ecstatic. It's more than we could have hoped for . . . We knew we were changing the law. It has been a hard campaign but well worth it."

Angela Mason, director of Stonewall, which campaigns for equal rights for homosexuals, said: "We are all absolutely delighted. This is an historic day for lesbian and gay rights, not just in this country but in the whole of the European Union."

The opinion follows a ruling from the Luxembourg court extending protection from discrimination at work to transsexuals. Lawyers believe this will pave the way for a ruling protecting homosexuals from any sort of discrimination at work.

Advocate general Elmer concluded: "Equality before the law is a fundamental principle . . . The rights and duties which result from EU law apply to all without discrimination, and therefore also to the approximately 35 million citizens of the EU who are homosexual."

● Following a report by the Human Rights Commission of the European Court of Justice saying that Britain's age of consent law discriminates against homosexuals, the Government is to allow a free vote by MPs on whether to reduce the homosexual age of consent from 18 to 16 — bringing it in line with the legal age for heterosexual acts.

Police review after death of CS victim

Owen Bowcott, Sebastian Naidoo and Duncan Campbell

POLICE use of CS sprays should be urgently reviewed, a coroner said last week, after a verdict of unlawful killing on a Gambian footballer who was asphyxiated face down in an east London police station.

The recommendation came at the end of a 4½-week inquest into Ibrahima Sey, whose death in police custody is likely to heighten concerns about police restraint techniques and the treatment of black suspects. The decision was the third time in the past two years in which Metropolitan Police officers have been involved in an unlawful killing.

Mr Sey, aged 29 and an asylum seeker, died in March last year just two weeks after the force began testing incapacitant sprays. The call by the coroner, Dr Harold Price, for all police forces to review their use of CS solvent will increase pressure on the Home Office to reconsider the issue.

Mr Sey — who had briefly been a police officer in Gambia and played for the country's Under 25 squad — had begun to struggle while in police custody after being arrested following a domestic incident. He was brought down and handcuffed with his arms behind his back. When he continued to struggle, police used a CS spray.

"He was drinking and sucking it in and it appeared not to have an effect," WPC Jackie Cannon told the court. He was carried face down into a custody suite and placed on the floor.

At that point he appeared to relax and did not respond. An ambulance was called but when it arrived several minutes later, the paramedics found him still handcuffed in the prone position. He was dead on arrival at hospital.

The hearing was the latest in a series of police custody deaths associated with "positional asphyxia" where suspects were handcuffed with their arms behind their back.

CS is intended to be used for violent or life-threatening incidents, not merely to facilitate arrests. Chief police officers' guidelines on CS incapacitant specify that "prisoners must not be left . . . in a prone, face-down position. The suspect should be carefully monitored . . . until the effects of CS have worn off".

Less foul play and more diplomacy

THE NEW thriller from the Middle East should be stocked on the fiction shelf in airport bookshops. The trouble is it really did happen. When Israel released the Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Yassin from jail, this seemed a useful gesture as talks with the Palestinians were about to resume. Instead it turns out to have been forced on Binyamin Netanyahu by King Hussein of Jordan, as a result of the arrest of two agents of Mossad, the Israeli secret service, caught while trying to assassinate another Hamas leader in Amman.

Yes — to anticipate Israel's excuses — terrorism may have to be fought by unconventional means. But does anyone in the Likud government believe that, if the operation had succeeded, it would have deterred Hamas instead of provoking it? Has not the lesson of the murder in Gaza last year of the "Engineer", which led to more horrific bombings and then to the electoral defeat of Shimon Peres, been learnt? Not for the first time, Mr Netanyahu behaves in such a way as to suggest either an alarming lack of judgment or plain indifference to working for peace. Either way it is a very gloomy prospect.

Nor is it brighter elsewhere. Last week's resignation by the veteran Palestinian politician Haider Abdel-Shafi from the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) focuses attention upon the equally blind behaviour of Yasser Arafat. It is two months since the PLC, appalled by corruption and incompetence in Mr Arafat's cabinet, called on him to form a new government. Yet he has continued to ignore what is now a crisis of confidence. Palestine Report, the bulletin of an independent group of journalists and researchers, records ever growing popular disquiet. The peace process still has majority support for lack of any alternative. But almost 90 per cent of those polled believe that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is corrupt, and two-thirds regard the Council itself as subservient to the PA. Human rights organisations protest at the continued use of British emergency regulations to justify political arrests. And statistics show a steady rise in poverty, mostly due to the Israeli closures, withdrawal of work permits, and banning of exports to Israel of Palestinian goods.

In these baffling and demoralising times, the Israelis and Palestinians need good friends and good advice. It may be a matter for regret that international convention and preponderance of power have cast the United States as the best friend available. But since this is so, it places a premium on Washington to provide strong support and clear encouragement for the peace process. The Palestinians, though well aware of the historical bias towards Israel, value what has been achieved through US good offices and hope for more consistent treatment. Yet that is exactly what is missing under the new administration. Madeleine Albright headed for Israel last month sounding one-sided in Mr Netanyahu's favour. In the end she said more to please the Palestinians than they had expected. She repeated her call for a "time-out" on new Jewish settlements recently when Mr Netanyahu announced plans for new units in Efrat. Then last week she inexplicably described settlement-building as "legal". What is illegal is attempted murder on foreign soil by agents using false passports. If Ms Albright is to create any impression of US impartiality, she should condemn what happened in Amman as loudly as she has denounced the terrorism of Hamas. And most important, the US has to become a more consistent broker, or ask others to take up the task.

Uncool views on global warming

THE WORLD has a surplus of greenhouse gases but a deficit of specific targets for their reduction. That is the task the Earth Summit follow-up conference sought to tackle in June, and which Bill Clinton addressed on Monday in a White House special conference. The aim is to firm up Washington's position ahead of the United Nations-sponsored meeting in Kyoto in two months' time. Unless an international consensus on hard objectives can be cobbled together, Kyoto will fail. The collective commitment first made in Rio five years ago will be seen to have lapsed and there is little chance of staging a second mobilisation.

A great deal depends on the success of Mr Clinton's effort. He has already pledged support for a strong agreement in Kyoto that would set binding limits for greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, power plants and factories. The only problem is . . . that the United States itself is a large part of the problem. Indeed the lack of firm targets so far stems very largely from George Bush, who was only enticed to the Rio Earth Summit after targets had been abandoned. The final text was full of what the negotiators called "constructive ambiguities". It proclaimed the "aim" of reducing emissions by the developed countries to their 1990 levels by 2000, but had no mandatory element. That is why two years ago governments agreed to toughen the treaty. Yet the place where this should have been achieved — the "Earth Summit Plus Five" in June — fizzled out with no agreement on targets, in spite of acknowledging that "overall trends . . . are worse today than they were in 1992".

The fudged proposals put forward last week by Japan — which the European Commission criticised on Monday — are not a good sign. Nor is the agonisingly slow pace at which the US has edged towards making up its mind. Thinking in both of these industrialised powers seeks to introduce variables that would allow them to pick-and-mix in order to reduce the pain of energy reduction.

Whether the main developing countries such as India and China should also accept restrictions will be a contentious issue in Kyoto. They argue that it is the developed countries which have produced 75 per cent of greenhouse gases in this century. The West replies that these new industrial tigers will soon generate more emissions and must be curbed now (while at the same time urging them on to ever faster growth). How to solve this contradiction will be difficult anyhow. There will be no chance at all if the rich countries take refuge in more selfish evasions. As Tony Blair said at the June summit, "If we fail in Kyoto, we fail our children . . . We must all deliver on the commitments we make."

Rush to tarnish Diana's memory

IT HAS not taken long after the Princess of Wales's death for new questions of taste to be raised. Some critics complained about a newspaper picture of the UK's International Development Secretary, Clare Short, on Brighton beach wearing body armour to publicise the campaign against land-mines. They said that her pose echoed the pictures of Diana in Angola. A more vehement body of criticism has been aroused by Andrew Morton's revised book on the princess, which went on sale last weekend. Buckingham Palace described it as blatant exploitation: Mr Morton claims to have behaved "extremely honourably". There were crowds waiting to buy the first copies.

The mood of national consensus — almost a feeling of collective distaste — after the funeral is clearly not going to last, and these two episodes, although very different in scale, will be the first of many more. Ms Short sought to focus attention on a humanitarian campaign supported by millions of ordinary people to which most governments have acceded reluctantly and under public pressure. What drove the parallel home with the image from Angola was not so much the body armour as the use of an identical sign, in Portuguese, warning of the danger of mines. Perhaps the campaign should use a sign in Cambodian instead.

The publication of Mr Morton's book poses issues of greater magnitude. Any funds raised by Ms Short's efforts will go solely to help the victims of war. Mr Morton has promised to make a donation of undisclosed size in memory of Diana, but no one is disputing that he, his publishers and the bookshops will profit hugely. The matter would not end even in the unlikely event that they gave all the proceeds to charity. For publication of this revised version involves the release of new and very personal information about Diana and others close to her who are still alive. It is not just a matter of revealing "the methodology behind the book", as its author claims. He also argues that failure to reveal her role in the original book would be "to dishonour her memory". Diana will surely be remembered for much more substantial contributions to life. There is also the question of timing. Mr Morton protests that he did not start discussing a new edition with his publisher until the end of the week after the fatal accident. A week may be a long time in today's media world, but that still seems like extraordinarily indecent haste.

Who governs Britain: parliament or people?

Hugo Young

WHEN the People's party was Old Labour, the label was a class statement. The people were outside the power élite and Labour represented them. Ranged against the governing classes, the people stood for equality and fraternity, and sometimes even liberty. They were the under-recognised majority, now, with the help of Attlee, Bevin and the rest, empowered to fight back: the outsiders whose struggle was to get in.

The People's party, New Labour-style, is the opposite. The people refers not to the excluded, but to all the population. It's a megalomanic claim, and gratifies a lot of needs. New Labour is New Britain, all the New British who reckon to count for something. Most of those at the party's conference in Brighton basked in the warmth of a collective invoked by leaders several hundred times last week. The people's endorsement is stamped on every decision. It gives me the creeps.

Those who keep going on about the people, first of all, have no sense of history. The marketing brilliance it took to capture and transform a piece of old Labourite language is less compelling than the memory of where People's Democracies began. Sound-bite theft is all very well, but when Gordon Brown refers to "the three modernisations", has he forgotten what China was actually *like* under Mao and Deng? The great leap forward to the People's Democracy of Britain can't be far behind.

In Blairite usage, the people are benign. Copious repetition is meant to amplify what happened on May 1. Having won an election, Mr Blair is entitled to remind us he spoke for the people, and to do everything he can to deepen their interest in government. He deplores the cynicism of the age, and can't believe how many citizens seem disaffected. The people's mandate is a legitimate route to the people's involvement. Telling people that government is theirs not ours is one way to maximise their enlistment in the project.

But what project, exactly, have they signed up for? Is this a case of the people telling ministers what to do, or of ministers announcing what the people are supposed to have decided? Who defines the popular will? Is it top-down or bottom-up? History overflows with cases where the first masquerades as the second. But the co-option of the people behind every decision is the start of something slippery.

The people is the oldest weapon of the demagogue. Mr Blair's programme so far gives no offence to majority opinion. But if everything is done in the name of the majority, where are the limits? What the people give they can take away, and when the people are summoned in support of one policy, why can't they demand their say in another? After the People's Lottery, why not the People's Gallows? It is, after all, what the people seem to want.

If the people are the source of every piece of legislative wisdom, from tuition fees to an independent Bank, what price minority causes that the majority take no part in? When the people's will is the supreme test, why should the Government give a single cent to Covent Garden opera? As for Oxford and Cambridge, they're on the way to being deposed for the crime of being places of élitist education. From the people, it's a short stride to populism, the political stance whose defining claim is to be the creed of majorities whom the élite has conspired to suppress. Populism is an ugly phenomenon, often based on bogus claims. It's not merely about majorities, but about claiming majority support for opinions hitherto given only minority credence: Europhobia, for example, or censorship, or a host of other illiberal positions.

Margaret Thatcher never deigned to invoke the people, but she prided herself on all these branches of populism. Mr Blair would disclaim all populism, but where does his reverence for the people end?

The people's Britain, as he deploys it, runs against the grain of British life and the constitution. The people is an entity that sits easily with direct democracy but is out of place in the parliamentary system as hitherto understood. Here the popular will works through the filter of representative democracy. Parliament, not the people, is sovereign: an arrangement that constrains the power of demagogues and protects minorities against coarse majority self-interest.

It is possible that New Labour wishes to give more formal recognition to the people. Some of their leaders talked, before the election, of the case for more plebiscitary democracy. More referendums are coming forth from this Government than any in history, often rightly. It's beginning to seem more likely than not that both the European single currency and the Westminster electoral system will be submitted to popular opinion before the next election.

BUT the yen for by-passing Parliament spreads wider. Already the House of Commons, which must be called, in New Labour parlance, the nation's elected focus-group, is scheduled for displacement in certain of its functions by 5,000 nominees: the new supreme focus-group, paid out of government funds, to keep ministers in touch with what the people are really thinking.

Nothing yet happening is the product of bad intentions. Mr Blair passionately desires to get the people involved. Nor are his poses of humility a sham. He thinks he has been entrusted with a sacred duty. All the same, these incessant references to the people are a ploy. The people are being told what is good for them, and then being exalted as the authors of policies they've had none but the vaguest role in putting together. All critics, including those in Parliament, are in danger of being swept aside by a version of democratic bullying, the hauteur of the masses harnessed to carry all before it.

Every time I heard about the people last week, I felt more inclined to reach for my book of quotations. Alcuin (735-804 AD) was a useful start: "Those people should not be listened to who keep saying the voice of the people is the voice of God, since the riotousness of the crowd is always very close to madness." Better still, a more recent epigrammist (fl 1979-90) can be adapted: there is no such thing as The People. There are individual men and women. Everything else is faintly sinister artifice.

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The Washington Post

Washington Considers Mission to Congo

John M. Goshko in New York

THE United States is considering sending a high-level mission to Congo in an effort to break a six-week deadlock between President Laurent Kabila and a U.N. human rights team that has been prevented from investigating alleged massacres of refugees.

Sources said that if Washington goes ahead with the plan, the mission would be headed by a special envoy with strong credentials for influence and expertise in African affairs, possibly a member of Congress or someone not serving in government. They said a decision was expected from Washington within a few days.

According to the sources, Secretary General Kofi Annan has agreed to give the mission two weeks to see what it can accomplish before the U.N. determines whether to withdraw the rest of its investigating team. The U.S. mission would seek talks with Kabila and would visit other countries in the region such as Uganda, Angola and Rwanda. These countries helped Kabila's rebels in their successful campaign to overthrow longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last May, and the U.S. mission would seek their aid in influencing Kabila.

The U.S. initiative arose in discussions between U.S. officials and Annan, whose difficulties in gauging Kabila's intentions about cooperating with the investigation caused him last week to order the four team leaders to New York for consultations. Annan acted in the wake of reports from the Reuters news agency and an African-based agency that Kabila had called for the U.N. team to leave the country.

To compound the confusion, on Thursday last week Reuters issued a terse advisory saying its original report about remarks allegedly made by Kabila at the Lusaka, Zambia, airport "is wrong and is withdrawn."

Reuters said Kabila did not speak to reporters at the airport about the U.N. investigation and did not, as originally reported, say, "We request Kofi Annan to ask them to leave." The original Reuters report also quoted Kabila as saying in Lusaka: "These investigators are just issuing statements from posh hotels in Kinshasa. They have failed to go to these areas to prove that the massacres took place." That statement, the Reuters retraction said, was made at a September 29 banquet. No explanation was given of why Reuters had sent out the original report.

U.N. officials said that while Annan had been concerned by the comments attributed to Kabila, the report was not the reason he had recalled the team's leaders and last week's retraction would not affect their travel to New York. Instead, the officials said, Annan was motivated primarily by the fact that the team has been forced to sit idly in Kinshasha for almost six weeks because Kabila's government has refused to give members access to suspected massacre sites.

"He felt it was time to sit down directly with the team leaders and try to figure out what Kabila's game is and how to deal with it," said one U.N. official who asked not to be identified.

It was in that context, sources said, that Bill Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, broached to Annan the possibility of an American mission. Richardson traveled to Kinshasa earlier this year in attempts to negotiate with Kabila about permitting the U.N. investigation. However, the sources said, if a special envoy is sent again, it will not be Richardson.

The U.N. team went to Congo on August 24 to look into reports that Kabila's rebels, during their military campaign against Mobutu, massacred Rwandan Hutu refugees. The Hutus, apparently including many women and children, allegedly were killed by the Tutsi-dominated rebel forces in retaliation for the 1994 slaughter of a 500,000 Tutsis in Rwanda.

While Kabila initially agreed to a U.N. probe, he has restricted the team's ability to move outside Kinshasa and has insisted on conditions that effectively would cripple the investigation. As the impasse has dragged on, the United States, members of the European Community and other nations have tied the promise of much-needed assistance to Congolese cooperation with the investigation.

Male bonding . . . Promise Keepers pray at the Mall in Washington during preparations for last weekend's mass gathering of men who belong to the evangelical Christian movement PHOTO MARK WILSON

When It's All Right to Stand By Your Man

OPINION

E. J. Dionne Jr.

THEDA SKOCPOL surprised a lot of people last month with her thoughts about Promise Keepers. That's the all-male evangelical Christian group which held a mass rally in Washington last weekend in defense of fatherhood and the family. Skocpol is a Harvard professor, a proud liberal and a staunch feminist, not exactly the Promise Keeper type.

Yet she said at an American Political Science Association session that she was not prepared to join other feminists in condemning the group. Why?

"Promise Keepers is a movement for family restoration and it speaks to the confusion many men have over what their role is supposed to be," she said in an interview last week. "Women are changing and becoming more assertive, and rightly so. But we have to acknowledge that this has created a confusing situation for men . . . This movement is very complex, as many restorationist movements are."

Her advice to her fellow feminists is to "engage the Promise Keepers in public discussion". In a cross fire world, Skocpol's view is a bracing acknowledgement that you neither have to love nor hate a movement like Promise Keepers. The fear of feminists and liberals is twofold: that it is a front group for the Religious Right, and that it is trying, in the words of National Organization for Women President Patricia Ireland, "to take back the rights of women."

These are not paranoid fantasies. Promise Keepers' rally had the support of Christian conservative activists Pat Robertson, James Dobson and Gary Bauer — not a pantheon to inspire the confidence of feminists or liberals. As for the movement's leader, Bill McCartney, "If you asked him his politics, there's no doubt they'd be conservative," said Patrick Glynn, the author of a sympathetic piece on the movement in the current issue of The Responsive Community.

On the matter of women's roles, the group draws inspiration from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church."

That passage was once a staple at Christian wedding services, but many contemporary Christians decline to use it, seeing the reading as offensive or, at the least, culturally conditioned by the times St. Paul lived in. If the Promise Keepers truly mean to argue that this approach to marriage is the one and only Christian way, they'll get a big fight from secular feminists, but also from many Christians.

But up to now, at least, McCartney and the rest of the Promise Keeper leadership have, as Glynn put it, "taken concrete steps to keep politics on the back burner."

And Promise Keepers is doing two good deeds. What differentiates last weekend's march from Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March is that Promise Keepers has engaged in an aggressive campaign of racial healing.

And as Skocpol argues, a group trying to make men take seriously their responsibilities as fathers and husbands is raising the right issue at a time of family breakdown, the source of so many other problems.

Were Promise Keepers to embrace an assertively right-wing, anti-feminist message, it would justify the fears of its critics — but also risk losing many members who seek not political propaganda but a transforming religious experience akin to that offered by Billy Graham's Crusades.

For now, Skocpol has the right approach: to admire the good things Promise Keepers do while insisting they're dead wrong if they say that you have to be opposed to feminism to honor the family — or fathers.

NATO Allies Row With U.S. Over Costs of Enlargement

William Drozdiak in Maastricht

A FRESH conflict between the United States and Europe over the costs of NATO enlargement threatens to complicate the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic just as member states' legislatures are opening the final debate on whether to ratify the alliance's expansion.

Barely three months after Western leaders toasted the alliance's embrace of the new East European democracies at their summit conference in Madrid, several European governments are voicing serious misgivings about the U.S. insistence that they, along with the new members, should carry the bulk of the expenses related to NATO enlargement.

The gravity of U.S.-European differences became clear last week during a protracted discussion among alliance defense ministers on the nuts and bolts of the military adaptations necessary to carry out the most ambitious expansion of NATO in its 48-year history.

The Clinton administration estimates that NATO expansion will cost about $35 billion over the next decade and the U.S. share will amount to no more than $2 billion. The United States contends that the vast majority of the costs should be borne by existing allies and new eastern partners because they need to make the biggest investments to adapt their military forces to the rapid mobility and power-projection requirements of the post-Cold War era.

But NATO's other members are balking at the idea of paying $16 billion or more — their estimated share of expansion costs — at a time when economic austerity measures and the lack of a visible threat make the cause of larger defense budgets politically unpopular.

At the same time, there are strong doubts that the three new members will be able to afford the $17 billion investment the Clinton administration believes the three together must make to bring their defenses up to NATO standards. The International Monetary Fund recently urged all three to avoid large defense costs that could damage their fragile economies.

Key U.S. Senate hearings this week could tip the balance in next year's vote on whether to ratify expansion. Most NATO governments say they anticipate no problems in securing approval from their national legislatures.

But the United States requires endorsement by two-thirds of the Senate, where some legislators harbor doubts about long-term expansion costs, the dilution of the alliance and the potential risk of committing U.S. troops and nuclear weapons to the defense of Eastern Europe.

During last week's meeting, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen insisted cost will play an important role in persuading Congress that Europe is willing to assume greater responsibility for its defense. He also stressed that NATO's new partners must prove they are willing to pay their fair share and not depend on the goodwill of wealthier members. "There can be no free lunch," he said.

The United States has been accused by some European governments of pushing the enlargement agenda to promote new markets for American defense firms. But Cohen said the United States does not see enlargement as "an arms sales bonanza" and wants only to ensure NATO's military credibility.

He insisted the United States is encouraging the new partners to focus on training and communications, rather than big-ticket planes and other expensive hardware.

Defense ministers from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic sought to dispel any fears that public support for joining NATO might be flagging or that they are not prepared to make the financial sacrifices necessary to upgrade their military forces.

The Czechs, in particular, have been criticized because of low defense spending and recent surveys that suggest less than half of all voters endorse membership of NATO.

Pope Holds Mass for 1.5 Million

Anthony Faiola
In Rio de Janeiro

POPE John Paul II celebrated High Mass for 1.5 million pilgrims on the picturesque shores of this sprawling metropolis last Sunday in the culmination of his four-day visit to Brazil, during which he sought to reinforce Church doctrine and stem losses to Protestant Evangelical churches in the world's largest Catholic country.

During his visit to Rio for the Second Annual Conference of the Family, the pope delivered one of his strongest and most passionate missives yet against the "forces of evil," including divorce and abortion, that he said are threatening the family.

Even in Rio, with a penchant for carnival-like decadence and where only 65 percent of the population is now Catholic, the pope drew massive crowds. They were kept at bay in this city known for being almost as violent as it is beautiful by 27,000 security forces.

Much of the pope's visit centered on ministering to a shrinking flock in a country where Evangelical Christians are wooing away an estimated 150,000 Catholics a year. But in meetings with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and in many of his speeches, the pope also pushed for more rights for ethnic minorities and the poor. He called for greater moves to equalize the distribution of wealth in Brazil, where the income gap is still one of the highest in the world.

But the main agenda on this trip, his third to Brazil and 80th outside of the Vatican, was to talk about the family. He delivered his most rousing speech in front of 180,000 worshippers at the Maracana soccer ground, the world's largest open stadium. As the pontiff sat on a red throne in the shadow of Rio's world famous Christ the Redeemer statue atop Mount Corcovado, the church presented more than a dozen families who told how Catholicism has kept them united.

The pope left no doubt about the Roman Catholic Church's continued crusade against the "the abominable crime of abortion" and his unflappable opposition to birth control and divorce.

The pope made such statements at a time when polls suggest that Brazilians are liberalizing their cultural acceptance to some long-taboo issues. A bill is now pending in congress to give all public hospitals permission to perform abortions on women who have been raped or whose lives are endangered by pregnancy.



Carnival atmosphere . . . security guards keep worshippers in check during the papal mass in Rio
PHOTO: PAUL HANNA

Pilgrims Stay Away on St. Francis's Day

Vera Haller in Assisi

THIS small hill town in Italy's Umbria province where St. Francis founded his religious order in the 13th century is usually a hub of activity on the saint's name day. A procession weaves through the narrow streets, prayer vigils are held and the festivities, which thousands attend, culminate in a Mass in the magnificent white and rose stone basilica built in his honor.

This year is different. Assisi — one of the towns worst hit by a series of earthquakes in the past week — was practically deserted last Saturday, its streets empty of tourists and religious pilgrims and the doors to the basilica closed.

"It's just awful to see Assisi dead like this," said Paolo Simonelli, who opened his gift shop on the street leading to the basilica but was finding no takers for his trinkets, which included porcelain figurines of St. Francis.

The earthquakes, two strong ones on September 26 and a weaker one on Friday last week, have caused widespread damage to Italy's central regions of Umbria and Marches. Two smaller aftershocks hit the area last weekend.

Eleven people died in the first tremors and at least 20 were injured on Friday last week. Tens of thousands of residents whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the temblors are sleeping in tents and campers supplied by the government. Most of the homeless will probably be able to return home after engineers check the soundness of their buildings, but this process is expected to take weeks.

Assisi has emerged as a symbol of the pain caused by the earthquakes because of the damage sustained by the basilica of St. Francis. Huge chunks of the vaulted ceiling in the basilica's upper sanctuary collapsed on September 26, killing four people inside, including two Franciscan friars. Its renowned frescoes, including a cycle of 28 paintings depicting the life of St. Francis by the Renaissance master Giotto, were damaged.

"It's a disaster. Parts of the frescoes are irreparable. There aren't just chunks of plaster, but tiny, tiny fragments which will be almost impossible to piece together," said Paolo Pastorello, one of about 40 art restorers who are volunteering their time to the restoration effort. They are still trying to sort out pieces of the frescoes from piles of debris, he said, organizing them as best as they can under tents set up outside the basilica.

The restorers, from all over Italy, are sleeping in a tent city near Assisi. "They offered us housing, but we preferred to stay in the tents in solidarity with the residents — and it's probably safer than staying in a house with all these earthquakes," said Alessandra Morelli, another restorer.

The Rev. Nicola Giandomenica of the Franciscan monastery attached to the basilica said the 52 friars living there were "deeply pained" by the week's events. "The pain is especially felt by the older friars, who say they've never experienced a name day for St. Francis like this."

While Assisi was blanketed in a strange quiet, a simple open-air Mass was said for St. Francis in front of the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli a few miles away. It was the only event held to mark the saint's name day; all other festivities were canceled as a sign of respect for those who died in the basilica.

The Mass, attended by several hundred people from the region, was offered by Archbishop Dionigi Tettamanzi of Genoa, whose diocese from the Liguria region donated a fresh supply of oil for the lamp that lights the tomb of St. Francis in the lower church of the basilica. A different region of Italy donates the oil each year. He and the other priests who officiated stood under a white tent.

"I think St. Francis would have been happy to be here today under a tent like all the other people," said a Franciscan friar attending the Mass.

Britain's Leader Turns Presidential

Dan Balz in Brighton

TONY BLAIR has adopted many personas as Britain's leader: political reformer, griever in chief, genial host of Friday night town meetings, relentless enforcer of a disciplined message. He is called the prime minister, but he plays a role more familiar to Americans — the role of president.

Both as a candidate and as prime minister, Blair has embraced a presidential style of leadership, geared for the age of television and the era of declining faith in political parties. He knows well how to manipulate the levers of party politics, but his soaring popularity has grown more out of his ability to tap the public mood and often define it first, unencumbered by party or cabinet.

At the Labor Party's annual conference in this seaside town, the difference between Blair and the rest of his new government is clear. There are other formidable figures in his cabinet and others no less committed to the modernizing agenda that is the hallmark of this government. But Blair rises above the restraints and boundaries of his party and speaks directly to the people.

His entrance into the hall last week was emblematic of his style of politics. A lone spotlight followed Blair as he made his way from a side entrance, down the aisles and onto the stage. It was the stagecraft of presidential-style politics, a single light concentrating the energy of the arena into the personality of a single political leader.

"He's moving toward a presidential style, and by the time he leaves office he will have completed the transition," said Robert Worcester of the polling firm MORI. "And it's clearly on his mind — on the forefront of his mind."

In the British media, Blair's keynote speech last week prompted many comparisons, most of them to American presidents. Some saw John F. Kennedy in Blair's call for a new age of giving in Britain. Others compared Blair's call for Britain to become "a beacon to the world" to Ronald Reagan's description of the United States as "a shining city on a hill." One analyst likened Blair's political agility to that of Franklin D. Roosevelt. And throughout his rapid rise to power, the parallels with President Clinton have become commonplace — two younger men who brought their parties back to power by embracing centrist policies and new rhetoric.

Blair is not the first British prime minister to act presidentially. Harold Wilson, whose first Labor government was elected in the mid 1960s, openly attempted to imitate Kennedy's language and informality. Margaret Thatcher, the dominant Conservative prime minister of the 1980s, combined force of personality and a strong ideological edge to project herself above her cabinet. John Major, who succeeded Thatcher before losing his post to Blair, employed personal touches to connect with voters.

But what Blair has done is especially notable given the way past Labor leaders have operated, according to Michael Foley, author of The Rise Of The British Presidency. "In British politics, the ethos is of the collective and the corporate, with party control based on solid party allegiance," Foley said. In past Labor governments, cabinet members had significant powers, making the prime minister merely "first among equals." Blair, he said, has centralized powers that go well beyond a party leader's previous grasp.

Blair has become the personal embodiment of what he calls "New Labor," his description of a political party that has recast itself very much in his image. Yet he almost floats above his party, some say even disdains it. Facing an unfriendly resolution urging renationalization of the railroads, Blair went on radio and warned that, if the vote went against him, "it ain't going to happen." He did not lose.

He similarly floats around his own government, in the way a president does. He sets the tone, focuses on big-picture issues and walks away from squabbles among his cabinet ministers.

Labor Party polls put his approval rating at 93 percent. A MORI poll published last week in the Times of London confirmed his success. It found 75 percent of those questioned approved of Blair's performance, a record for a British prime minister, while 57 percent approved of his government.

U.S. Murder Rate at a Low

Rene Sanchez

THE murder rate in the United States is lower now than at any point since the late 1960s, and other serious crime also is continuing to decline, the FBI reported last week.

For the fifth consecutive year, violent crime and property crime have dropped nationwide, including in most large cities, and in particular for murder. That offense declined 9 percent last year, with 19,645 people slain. The murder rate, now 7.4 incidences for every 100,000 people, is 17 percent lower than in 1992.

Overall, violent crime dropped 6 percent last year, according to the final version of an annual FBI report; preliminary numbers were released this summer.

Many law enforcement officials and criminologists say the progress on crime is the result of several converging trends: Growing police crackdowns on minor crimes, tougher prison sentences and the aging of a large segment of the population. The Clinton administration called the report clear evidence that its anti-crime policies, which include giving communities more money to hire police officers, are working.

"These numbers show that escalating crime is not an unsolvable problem," Attorney General Janet Reno said. She also announced last week that the violent crime arrest rate among juveniles nationally decreased by 9 percent last year.

But some analysts contend the good news about crime still should be treated with caution because it could be due mostly to a demographic fluke — a nationwide decline in the population of juveniles and young adults, who commit a subastantial portion of crime.

Destitute Youngsters Take to the Streets

Daniel Williams
In St. Petersburg

THE BOYS huddling behind the statue of Catherine the Great on Nevsky Prospekt appeared for a moment to be blowing up balloons. But the balloons were plastic bags, and the boys were not exhaling air but breathing in glue. Spotted by a policeman, they tried to scramble away, but one, who appeared to be about 8, was collared.

It was a variation on a scene that is becoming common on the streets of Russia's cities — even such stately main streets as St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospekt. Vagrant children, some homeless, wander about looking for handouts, for pockets to pick, glue to sniff, vodka to guzzle, a sex partner to rob.

They are called *besprizorniki*, neglected ones, a word once used here to describe the legions of orphans who roamed Russia's streets and countryside during the civil warfare of the 1920s.

The word has made a sudden comeback in today's laissez-faire Russia, where many children appear to be clinging to survival. An epidemic of street children has made Russians fearful of a lost generation that at best will be undereducated and at worst grow up in a life of crime and disease.

"The indicators are frightening," said Ekaterina Rozhdektvenskaya, director of the Women's Organization for National Health, a social-welfare group. "Everywhere we turn, we see more violence toward children, more sex abuse, worse health, more fatherless homes. It looks bad for our future."

About 4 in 10 Russian children live in poverty, according to U.N. estimates. The number of juvenile criminal arrests has increased by more than a third since the early 1990s to more than 200,000 a year, according to Internal Affairs Ministry data.

In St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city with a population of more than 4 million, there may be as many as 3,000 vagrant children — and many more if those who spend as much time or more in the streets than at home are included.

In Moscow, the number is at least double that, social workers say. In warm weather, it is easy to spot such children lingering in parks and woods that surround both cities — or gathered outside fast-food restaurants.

Numerical comparisons with Russia's recent past are difficult to make. During the Soviet era, runaways and the homeless, whether children or adults, were treated by the Communist state as social aberrations. Children whose parents abused or abandoned them were placed in institutions or orphanages; runaways were regarded as delinquents and sent to reform schools.

"It's not like the problem did not exist; in fact, it was a big problem, but it simply was hidden from view," said Valery Sokolov, director of Nochlezka, a charity that operates homeless shelters in St. Petersburg.

These days, however, social and familial instability peculiar to the new capitalist Russia contribute to the growing herds of wandering youngsters. Workers who were underemployed under Soviet rule are unemployed today, and families have a hard time making ends meet. If there was little to buy with paychecks in Soviet times, at least there were paychecks. If social services were inefficient, today they are evaporating entirely for lack of funding.

Migrants from former Soviet republics swell the ranks of the homeless in Russia, which continues to use the Soviet system of internal passports to discourage migration from the countryside to the cities. Without a proper permit, the children of migrants cannot attend local schools, and many end up in the streets.

Kremlin funding for social services is sparse, and much of the burden falls on cash-poor and often-corrupt local governments.

"Taking care of these children is low on the spending totem pole," said Jeff Groton, a physician with Doctors of the World, a New York-based medical aid organization that runs health-care programs for neglected children in St. Petersburg.

All this is occurring against a backdrop of disturbing health and social trends in Russia — including declining life expectancy and rising alcoholism. Officials and aid workers in St. Petersburg say the majority of street children here are fleeing domestic violence associated with alcohol abuse.

According to published reports here, men who drink heavily frequently abandon families or bent their wives and children; many pregnant women drink to such an extent as to damage their unborn children; and at least one Russian family in five has an alcoholic member.

Of those street children not fleeing alcohol-related violence, estimates indicate that about a third are fugitives from state orphanages and reform schools; a third are offspring of women who have been forced out of their homes by abusive husbands; and a third are seeking adventure away from the city's sprawl of bleak, cookie-cutter housing projects. They live in sewers, pedestrian underpasses, attics, railway stations, garbage dumps and abandoned buildings.

The police, feared though they are, are responsible for rescuing children, either from abusive parents or the streets, and taking them to one of the city's 18 shelters. At some shelters, the city provides teachers' salaries, some food and perhaps dilapidated facilities. It is up to shelter operators, usually private charity groups, to refurbish the buildings and provide clothing, bedding, medical care, books, television and toys.

Many of the children brought in suffer from disease. Tuberculosis is common, and AIDS is becoming a concern, said Groton.

Most of the shelters are simply storage bins for children, according to a Nochlezka report. Others, however, have tried to prepare children either to return to their families — if considered safe — or to live in foster homes and perhaps be adopted.

A Grumpy Old Man Reflects

Thomas M. Disch

TIMEQUAKE
By Kurt Vonnegut
Putnam. 219pp. $23.95.

TIMEQUAKE is a novel by, and starring, Kurt Vonnegut. His co-star, and virtually the only other "character" in the book, is his alter ego, Kilgore Trout, who figured in two earlier Vonnegut novels, God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater (1965) and Breakfast Of Champions (1973). Trout has also published his own novel, Venus On The Half Shell (1975), but since it was written, without Vonnegut's consent, by Philip Jose Farmer, that book cannot legally be accounted part of the Trout oeuvre, though it enjoys its own peculiar and illegitimate glory as one of the few novels published by a non-entity.

It may be that the concept for Timequake is a steal from Thornton Wilder's Our Town. (Vonnegut discreetly acknowledges as much.) In a nutshell, everyone on Earth has to relive the 1990s on automatic pilot, observing but not participating in their lives. But what Wilder made poignant, Vonnegut simply doesn't engage with, for he refuses to deal either with the helplessness and/or horror of such an experience or with the trauma of release. No matter — intensity was never Vonnegut's forte. And anyhow Wilder had already done it.

What Vonnegut does, which no one can do better, is give a big post-modern shrug. The experience is shifted to the expert shoulders of Trout, who represents his creator's self-love and self-loathing at a level of imaginative intensity that mere memoir would not allow.

And that is not to reckon with the man's immense self-regard. Vonnegut namedrops like a rainstorm: A.E. Hotchner, Heinrich Boll, Dick Francis, Günter Grass, Andrei Sakharov, and a host of showbiz stars that his own celebrity has brought within a handshake's distance. The extended Vonnegut family is all on hand, as at a wedding, each with a characterizing anecdote. The author's bibliography and the salient facts of his public career are offered as candidly as on a resume.

And then there are the sententiae: There shall be no more war, we must love one another, etc. He echoes Henry Fonda, echoing John Steinbeck, echoing Eugene Debs, that as long as there is anyone poor or downtrodden or in prison, he, Kurt Vonnegut, is poor, downtrodden, and imprisoned, too. Oh dear, as Vonnegut might say.

Of his writerly life we learn that he still works, virtuously, on a manual typewriter, corrects his copy with pencil and then mails these pages off to his long-term professional typist in the country. This necessitates a walk first to the store, to buy a single manila envelope, and then to the post office, where he waits in line to buy a stamp. The process becomes a parading of Vonnegut's rectitude and unassuming human dignity relative to those boobs among us who use computers and fax machines or play the lottery.

If all this seems insufferably smug, it is, but since it comes from Vonnegut, America's favorite grumpy old man, you've got to love him. He has so cornered the market on elderly curmudgeonliness that his very belches (and there are plenty of them, including three or four really moldy dirty jokes) have a fragrance of *temps perdu*.

In a well-advised "Prologue," Vonnegut forewarns his readers that Timequake took 10 years to write, at the end of which, 74 years old, "I found myself in the winter of 1996 . . . the creator of a novel which did not work, which had no point, and which had never wanted to be written . . . Let us think of it as Timequake. And let us think of this one, a stew made from its best parts mixed with thoughts and experiences during the past seven months or so, as Timequake Two. Hokay?"

Hokay with me. The fact is that Vonnegut's fame and bankability are such that he is beyond rejection or even criticism. As for Trout — now a hack sci-fi writer in his eighties — though reduced to the condition and appearance of a bag lady he's still going strong, churning out unpublishable stories full of idiot-savant wisdom. His stories are, in synopsis, truly stupid, and we must be grateful that Vonnegut has had the discernment to imagine rather than write them.

And yet, as with Mortimer Snerd, it is Trout who may be the more memorable character. He is one of those, like Forrest Gump or Sherlock Holmes, who take their creator captive and become the boss. Even Vonnegut seems to be aware of this, for if the book has any message, it is that offered by Trout: "You were sick, but now you're well again, and there's work to do."

One may have doubts about this as a panacea to the world's problems. But as solace, it's on a par with Voltaire's advice, as mediated through Candide, that we should tend to our own affairs, a counsel of perfection to which the reader can only answer, Hokay.

Strong and Silent Star

Wendy Smith

PICKFORD
The Woman Who Made Hollywood
By Eileen Whitfield
University Press of Kentucky.
441pp. $25.

MARY PICKFORD'S unfairly remembered as a ringleted actress who played angelic children in maudlin silent movies. Canadian journalist Eileen Whitfield's excellent biography reclaims her from cliche, arguing persuasively that her films — and performances — are better than their reputation. Whitfield paints a nuanced, three-dimensional portrait of a complex woman whose story is a fascinating case study of a seminal period in Hollywood history.

Pickford entered the world as Gladys Louise Smith on April 8, 1892, in Toronto. Her father died when she was five; less than two years later she appeared in her first play, quickly becoming the financial mainstay for her beloved mother, Charlotte, and younger siblings. Apprenticeship in such melodramatic classics as Uncle Tom's Cabin and East Lynne, followed by five grueling years touring North America, completed her transformation into a mini-adult whose ability to incarnate youngsters onstage was remarkable for one who'd had little direct experience of carefree childhood.

By the time she bluffed her way into the office of Broadway producer David Belasco, who gave her the stage name Mary Pickford and put her in a hit play, the 15-year-old actress was a seasoned professional whose delicate, vulnerable beauty barely masked an iron will and ferocious ambition. Whitfield deduces that her theater acting was already simpler and more concerned with inner emotional truth than the period's conventional showy posturing. A lively account of her initial 1909 meeting with film director D.W. Griffith depicts a disdainful Pickford, convinced she was slumming for money, pricked in her pride and creative conscience: "Pickford liked to be excellent . . . [she sensed] that translating stage acting onto celluloid demanded a sea change in technique."

Pickford develops that technique. "Thoughts passed across her face like shadows, and she let them speak for her," writes Whitfield, who credits Pickford with doing as an actor what Griffith did as a director, intuitively grasping the artistic possibilities of this new medium and creating a new style to fulfill them. Astute analyses of Pickford's most famous roles — the Poor Little Rich Girl, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm and the Little Princess, to name only a few — point out that she perfected the blend of pathos and slapstick humor that Charlie Chaplin later made his trademark, and that her characters were usually feisty, streetwise adolescents, not innocent little girls. Whitfield contends that sanitized 1930s remakes of those three pictures by baby star Shirley Temple have tainted memories of Pickford's tougher interpretations.

She was tough off screen too, with a shrewd sense of her commercial value. "America's Sweetheart" was the most famous woman in the world in 1917, when she set off to sell war bonds with Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks, who became her second husband in 1920. (The international appeal of their films made these three the first truly modern celebrities.) Any movie mogul who thought he could get away with paying her less than she was worth was speedily disillusioned. Her 1916 contract with Adolph Zukor's Famous Players gave her half a million dollars a year or half her films' net profits (whichever was greater), her own production company, the right to choose her directors and a voice in the final cut. Three years later, she created United Artists with Chaplin, Fairbanks, Griffith and western star William S. Hart. This distribution vehicle for the principals' wholly owned productions prompted the wisecrack "the lunatics have taken charge of the asylum."


Mary Pickford: First celebrity of the modern age

She had less command over her personal life. Her substance-abusing siblings were a constant source of embarrassment and potential scandal. Her primary commitment to her mother sabotaged her first marriage, and Charlotte's death in 1928 probably triggered her long slide into alcoholism. She and Fairbanks ruled Hollywood from Pickfair, their mansion on Summit Drive, but the marriage foundered as the talkies swept silent films' royalty into professional oblivion and psychological drift. Whitfield's account of the couple's lurching trajectory toward a 1936 divorce neither of them really wanted is quietly heartbreaking, as is her gentle depiction of Pickford's final marriage, to the selflessly devoted Buddy Rogers (whom she frequently called "Douglas").

Pickford died in 1979, an alcoholic recluse so dismissive of her work that she once threatened to burn all her movies. Many have in fact been lost, and the others — like most silents — are often shown in badly deteriorated prints, dubbed with awful music. How fortunate, then, that the loving descriptions in this well-informed and passionate biography recapture the essence of those films, and of Mary Pickford's pioneering artistry.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 12 1997

Wild Ride Into Horror

Rachel Pastan

MAN CRAZY
By Joyce Carol Oates
Dutton. 282pp. $23.95.

THERE ARE things I probably don't have to say about Joyce Carol Oates's latest novel, Man Crazy — that it is a lyrical and violent book; that its voice is hypnotic and powerful; that it tells the story of a woman who, curtailed by circumstances, seems destined to come to a bad end.

I don't have to say these things because they were true of Oates's last novel as well, and the one before that. Oates's themes are as established and her voice as recognizable as those of any American writer living. On the one hand this is a tribute. On the other, it raises the bar. She has to find other ways to surprise us — to keep us wondering what will happen next.

Man Crazy, like so many of Oates's novels, immerses us immediately in brutality. "I'd been brought to the hospital in wrist shackles," the narrator, Ingrid Boone, begins. She goes on to describe how she stabbed herself with a cheap tin fork, how she has always had the habit of self-mutilation. The story then jumps backward, recounting Ingrid's lonely and sometimes violent childhood, tracing her descent into a pathological, aching passivity that leads first to promiscuity and later to involvement with a Satanic cult. Ingrid's mother is a loving but alcoholic beauty, her father a former fighter pilot and fugitive from justice.

It is never clear exactly why they have to hide out at a dismal lodge in upstate New York, except that it's a good background for a little ghost story Oates wants to tell. Indeed much of novel's causality remains murky, the story jumping from episode to episode. The language washes over us and lulls us even as the action shocks us, and the interplay between the two — the most effective aspect of the book — seems to interest Oates more than the complications of narrative.

For Ingrid's story seems not so much to unfold as to repeat itself, descending into horror. Her world is so dismal and her approach to life so passive that I grew frustrated, wanting Ingrid herself, and not just the writing, to compel me on.

For there is certainly wonderful writing here. The dialogue is terrific, the descriptions of the Chautauqua River dark and sensuous. There are brilliant turns of phrase, as when Ingrid describes herself as "sitting tense and erect in my skeleton" as she waits for her initiation into the Children of Satan.

In a brief chapter, Ingrid relates her father's theory that, for a pilot, there is the time on the ground and the time in the air: "When you're in the air . . . everything goes white, roaring, collapsed, blind." It seems to me that this is what Oates wants to create in her fiction, and does brilliantly — the crazy sensation of flying in an open cockpit, where the world dashes by in a roar of fumes and sensation, not quite needing to make sense. If you open your eyes and look around while you're reading Man Crazy, you may have the sense that you aren't going anywhere. But if you shut your eyes and give yourself up to it, the novel will take you on a dark and wild ride.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 12 1997

Investors have never had it so good. Can it last, or is disaster about to strike? **Paul Murphy** reports

Stocks and cheers

JOSEPH E GRANVILLE is all set. Bermuda shorts, box of cigars . . . Stocks are going up and he is planning a holiday. The man is an investment pundit who presents a hugely popular radio show in Kansas. According to his predictions, the Dow Jones Industrial Average — the key United States stock market index, which charts the progress of the country's biggest companies — will break through the 10,000 mark early in the New Year.

So Mr Granville has formed the Dow 10,000 club, and all the members are taking a celebratory three-day cruise on The Sovereign Of The Seas (73,000 tons, 2,300 passengers). Lots of other stock market pundits will be on board, and for an extra $160 "tuition fee" on top of the basic $872-per-cabin cost, happy cruisers will be able to attend seminars fronted by speakers from an outfit known as The Personal Capitalist. And, according to a travel agent's flier, there is also the promise of Mr Granville himself giving "another one of his famous stock market lectures replete with all his newest recommendations".

Any investor who has followed Mr Granville's advice over the past 15 months or so should be able to afford the cruise. In July last year, when the Dow Jones index stood at 5,170, he told his followers to start buying shares. Then, in April this year, with the Dow standing at 6,315, the man told everyone to fill their boots. The Dow is going to 10,000 by January, Mr Granville declared.

At the time he looked like another stock market quack in a country thick with quackish "investment gurus". The professionals — hard-headed Wall Street types who spend their days analysing every piece of information which might impact on share prices — were talking then of a stock market crash. They had listened to Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve and undisputed "master" of the world financial system, when he said that stock market investors were displaying "irrational exuberance". They were waiting for interest rates to go up.

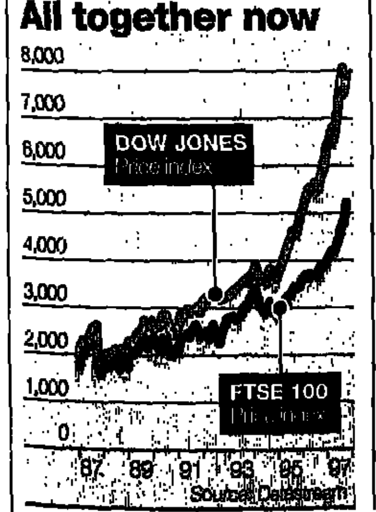
The idea that the Dow index might jump by two-thirds was, well, the sort of thing some Kansas radio celebrity would come up with. But with three months to go, the Dow 10,000 Club is looking less and less like a bunch of cultists heading for a messy mass suicide.

Recent weeks have seen the most dramatic stock market explosion — ripping through London as well as New York — that the financial world has seen. Last week, the Dow burst through 8,000, marking a 27 per cent rise this year.

Britain's own version of the Dow, the FTSE 100 index, surged through 5,300 on Thursday last week. The next day, the index jumped 160 points in one trading session — the second biggest one-day surge. The Footsie has rocketed 30 per cent this year as a jaw-dropping $400 billion has been added to the value of Britain's top 100 firms.

Such a feeding frenzy has never been seen before in the major Western financial centres. And, disturbingly, there is very little agreement on what is fuelling the markets. But whatever the cause, and whatever valuation yardsticks market analysts choose to use, shares are now more expensive than ever before. And on the two or three occasions in history when share prices have been close to current value levels, something has happened: the markets have crashed.

Most investment professionals use past stock market history to help them predict the future, and so many have spent the past 18 months growing increasingly bearish. If history says — as it does — that share prices are over-valued and waiting to collapse, the natural inclination is to get out of the stock market.





The most respected names in the British fund management industry have followed this logic — Carol Galley of Mercury Asset Management, Tony Dye of PDFM and Paul Myners of Gartmore.

Sadly, the "opportunity cost" of being underweight in the stock market when share prices are soaring has run to billions of dollars for the pensions these fund managers manage. Others have been bearish, as well. From individual punters in the futures market to Warren Buffett, the legendary US investor, word has come: "stock markets are over-cooked".

BUT prices have continued to rise, lending an air of unreality. All the time, takeover deals and corporate mergers have become increasingly extravagant, culminating in last week's news that a 13-year-old telecoms company called WorldCom — built through 150 acquisitions — is offering shares worth $30 billion to take over MCI, the US telecoms group that British Telecom was hoping to merge with (see story below).

Suddenly, some of those British bears who have been warning of a crash have begun to revise their views. Talk in the City is now all about interest rates falling and how a weaker pound will help British exporters.

The stock market is described as "under-pinned," and yet there is evidence of cracking. Share prices have not gone up in a straight line; there have been leaps and bounds, periods of vicious volatility. Many trading houses have been losing money as a result. There is little doubt that both last week's news that BZW, the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank, is up for sale and last month's announcement that Wall Street powerhouse Salomon Brothers is being taken over by the Travelers financial conglomerate were to a large extent brought on by the extreme conditions.

Worryingly, informed sources among City regulators say that the Securities and Futures Authority — the City watchdog that monitors all securities businesses — is working at full stretch, fighting potential and real fires across the Square Mile.

In short, the stock market is stressed. Experienced traders use words like "barking" and "barmy". There is a constant search for the "event" which might trigger a meltdown that will destroy investor confidence. Some pointed to the currency crisis that has swept through the Far East over the past two months; others have plumped for the Indonesian bush fires.

History shows the potential damage to investors' wealth. After the 1929 Wall Street crash, it took 25 years for share prices to regain their pre-crash levels.

There is an old stock market rule which says that equities always climb a wall of worry, but there is also a rule which says if you are worried about a stock, sell it and stop worrying.

Joe Granville and his Dow 10,000 gang would scoff at such advice, but the message is clear: stick to dry land.

BT mounts fightback against WorldCom's $30bn bid for MCI

Alex Brummer

BRITISH Telecom is planning to mount an aggressive campaign against WorldCom's surprise $30 billion paper offer for the United States long-distance telecoms group MCI as part of effort to sustain its global strategy.

The BT management believes that the offer by Bernard Ebbers of WorldCom is highly vulnerable to a stock market shakeout, and could be held up for a year by regulatory interference on both sides of the Atlantic — whereas BT's combination will be fully in place by January 1998.

But even if BT finds itself gazumped by WorldCom's short-term opportunism, it believes the UK telecoms group has a good chance of rapidly putting together an alternative, with the dominant US long-distance carrier AT&T seen as a potential partner. AT&T is understood to have expressed private interest in a deal with BT already, which would cut it in on the UK group's series of European partnerships.

Despite the City's euphoria over WorldCom's intervention — BT shares rose sharply on the news of the counterbid — BT chairman Sir Iain Vallance and chief executive Peter Bonfield believe that the decision for the MCI board, which was due to meet in Washington this week, will be far closer than the paper difference suggested by the two offers.

If MCI accepts the WorldCom offer, it will receive paper selling at an exceptionally high price-earnings ratio of 44, which will be extremely vulnerable to any reversal in the stock market.

Given that MCI's shareholders may have to wait for more than a year while the Federal Communications Commission and the European Commission examine the bid on competition grounds, the risks associated with WorldCom's paper offer may appear too great.

If and when BT goes public in its opposition to the WorldCom offer — it is currently barred from comment by US bidding rules — it may also draw attention to the role in the proposed deal of investment banker Salomon's.

After Salomon's equity operation reportedly took a large loss on MCI options after the disclosure of its problems in breaking into local phone markets, the banker emerged as adviser to WorldCom on its higher offer.

The main task for Sir Iain will be to convince BT and MCI shareholders that, while the WorldCom deal might look a good option over the short term, a deal between BT and MCI — which already has accumulated up to $2 billion of business through its Concert partnership — has real promise for the short to medium term.

It is the prospect of building on BT's European presence that is proving a magnet to both AT&T and some of the American Baby Bells, the regional service-providers in the US.

In Brief

THE crisis of confidence in Southeast Asian currencies returned as Indonesia's rupiah fell to a record low. It has devalued 50 per cent against the dollar in little more than four months. Even the region's most robust currency, the Singapore dollar, sank to a 40-month low.

FEARS that the Japanese economy is teetering on the brink of its first recession for 23 years were heightened as the country's most comprehensive and authoritative business survey revealed top executives expect conditions to deteriorate further in the coming months.

A NEW petrol price war was signalled by Shell as the oil group announced 3,000 managerial redundancies in its European retail operations. The shake-up will see Shell buying other service station chains and swapping assets with rivals across Europe.

BARCLAYS has confirmed that it is pulling out of large parts of its City banking activities. It is to sell its equities and corporate finance divisions and said it hoped to find a buyer for BZW "within a few months". Analysts said the sale could raise $800 million.

MICROSOFT has launched its new Internet software — Internet Explorer 4 — in the latest bout of what has been dubbed "the browser wars". The company has been locked in a battle with rivals Netscape for the past two years for domination of the market for Internet software.

NORTHERN ROCK, the UK-based building society, made a spectacular stock market debut when its shares soared to a peak of 470p, bringing windfalls of £2,350 ($3,800) to about half a million members.

THE SALE of Mocatta, the world's oldest bullion bank, to Canada's Bank of Nova Scotia for an undisclosed sum puts London's twice-daily gold-price fixing under majority foreign control for the first time.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates October 6	Sterling rates September 29
Australia	2.2266-2.2294	2.2469-2.2499
Austria	19.99-20.01	19.99-20.01
Belgium	58.61-58.83	58.62-58.72
Canada	2.2106-2.2126	2.2372-2.2394
Denmark	10.81-10.82	10.82-10.83
France	9.55-9.56	9.54-9.55
Germany	2.8409-2.8436	2.8419-2.8445
Hong Kong	12.47-12.48	12.50-12.51
Ireland	1.1057-1.1081	1.1042-1.1064
Italy	2,785-2,788	2,781-2,784
Japan	196.20-196.41	195.42-195.67
Netherlands	3.1997-3.2031	3.2005-3.2039
New Zealand	2.5436-2.5388	2.5341-2.5377
Norway	11.36-11.37	11.45-11.46
Portugal	289.71-290.04	289.47-289.81
Spain	239.97-240.23	240.12-240.31
Sweden	12.13-12.14	12.21-12.23
Switzerland	2.3417-2.3443	2.3458-2.3487
USA	1.6125-1.6134	1.6160-1.6170
ECU	1.4601-1.4622	1.4502-1.4520

FTSE100 Share Index up 79.7 at 5300.0. FTSE 250 Index up 51.3 at 4867.4. Gold up $4.75 at $332.85.

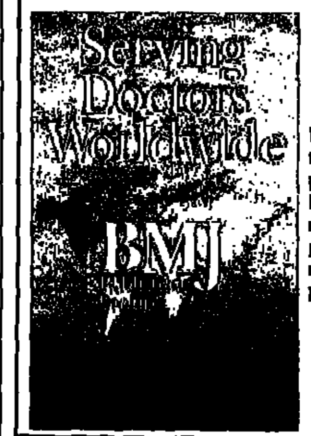
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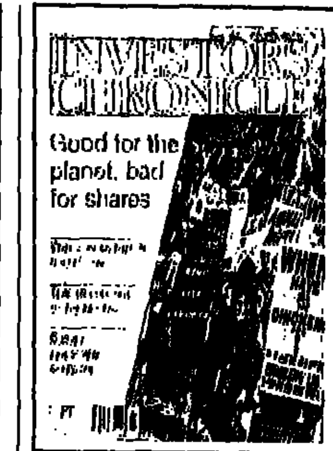


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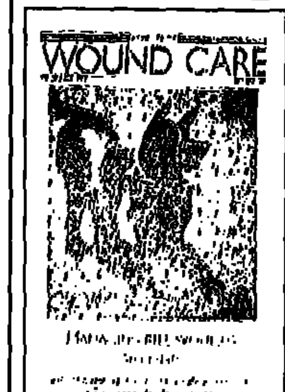
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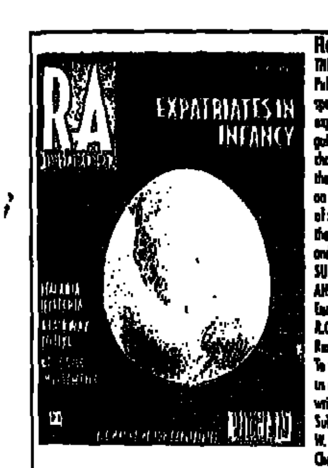
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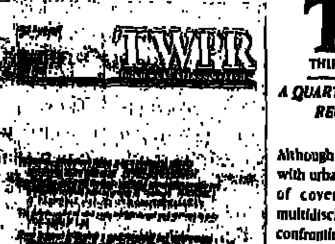
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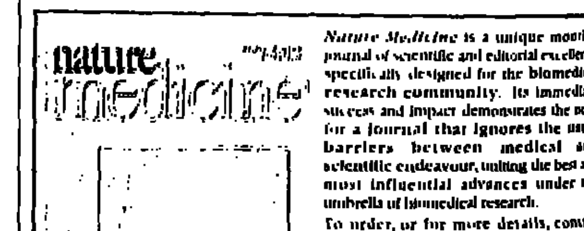
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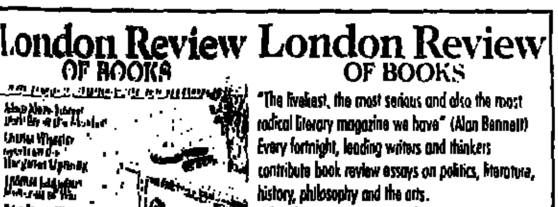
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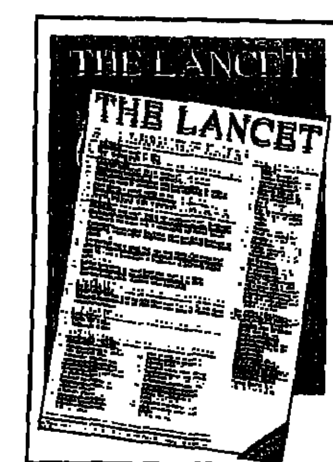
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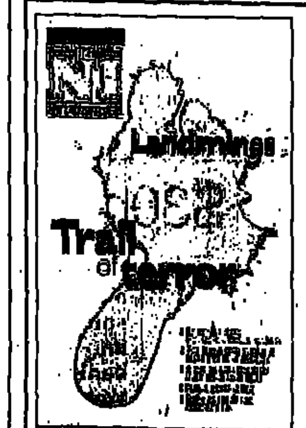
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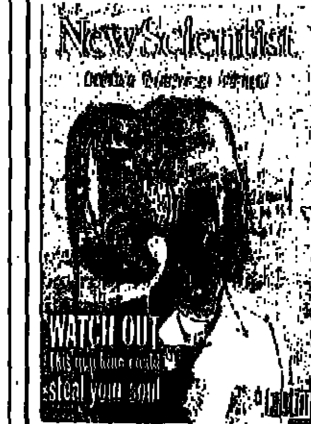
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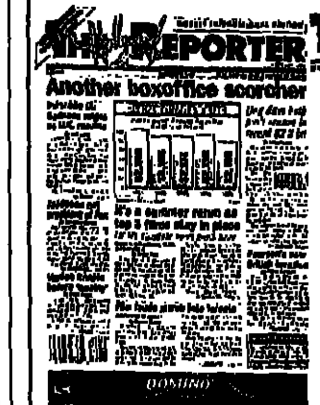
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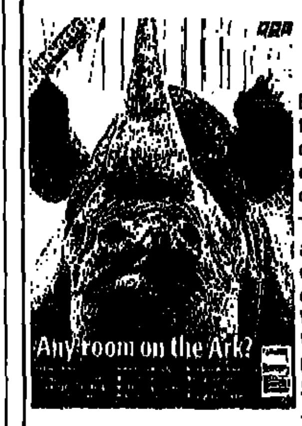
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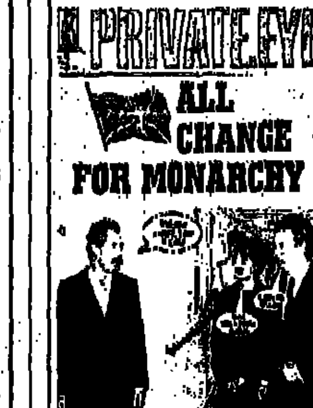
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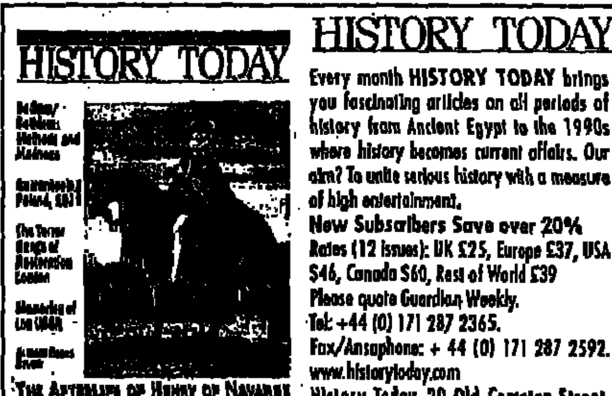


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French apology underlines Vatican's silence

COMMENT
Henri Tincq

ON SEPTEMBER 30, at a ceremony on the site of the Drancy deportation camp near Paris, high-ranking Catholic churchmen made a public apology for the French Church's attitude towards Jews during the last war.

The symbolic force of clasped Christian and Jewish hands recalled other great acts of reconciliation — Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in 1970, President François Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl standing silently side by side at Verdun cemetery in 1984, and President Jacques Chirac admitting, on July 16, 1995, France's "collective offence" in organising the rounding up of Jews at the Vel' d'Hiv' stadium exactly 53 years earlier.

Much had already been done to bring Jews and Christians together before the ceremony. But on this occasion the French Catholic hierarchy made a clean breast of what happened in the past and publicly repented.

German, Polish and French bishops have now acknowledged their wrongs. This only makes the silence of the Vatican all the more deafening — and paradoxical. No Pope before John Paul II was as insistent in urging his hierarchy to beg forgiveness for past wrongdoings and wipe the Church's slate clean. According to Luigi Accattoli, an expert on the Vatican, the Pope has delivered almost 100 speeches of "repentance" relating to a wide variety of issues, from the Crusades and the Inquisition to the wars of religion and the slave trade: a veritable avalanche of remorse and soul-searching.

In the presence of Jewish leaders at Castelgandolfo, in Italy, in September 1987, the Pope promised he would draw up a statement on the Church's responsibility for anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Ten years on, he has still not put his name, on behalf of the Church as a whole, to a document similar to those signed by French, German and Polish bishops.

Until his 1987 pledge, the Pope's initiatives had both amazed and irked the Jewish community. They included the canonisation in 1981 of Father Maximilian Kolbe, a notoriously anti-Semitic Pole who died in Auschwitz, and the beatification in 1987 of another Auschwitz victim, the German philosopher Edith Stein, a Jew who became a Carmelite nun.



Hands on . . . Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, right, shakes hands with Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger at a ceremony at Drancy, a former deportation camp near Paris, last week PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT WOLNTER

In 1987, Kurt Waldheim, a former Wehrmacht officer who had become president of Austria, was received with pomp and circumstance at the Vatican, while the rest of the international community snubbed him.

The 1987 agreement signed by Catholics and Jews providing for the removal of a Carmelite convent next to Auschwitz was not respected by the Polish clergy. The Vatican was slow to resolve the crisis. Matters have been made worse by the veil of secrecy with which the Vatican has shrouded Pope Pius XII's silence during the second world war.

The Pope, who talks of a "new evangelisation", is suspected of wishing to "Christianise" places of great Jewish suffering, and of interpreting the Holocaust as the fulfilment of the mystery of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Amazingly, when visiting Auschwitz in June 1979, he described it as "the Calvary of the contemporary world".

There is now little point in raking up old grievances. No Pope has done as much as John Paul to reform the Catholic Church's teaching on Judaism. In 1986, he was the first Pope to visit Rome's main synagogue and express his "horror" at "the hatred, persecutions and manifestations of anti-Semitism that have occurred, no matter what the period or who was responsible".

He told the Jews: "You are our favourite brothers and, in a sense, our elder brothers." He went to see Jewish communities in every country he visited, knelt before the Hebrew-inscribed memorial at Birkenau, and became, in December 1993, the first Pope officially to recognise the state of Israel.

And yet there remain lingering doubts about the Vatican's ability to take its self-criticism to its logical conclusion. The entire history of the Jewish people is one of acceptance and rejection. French Jews have not forgotten that only a century after being described by the Convention as "citizens like other people", they became embroiled in the Dreyfus affair, which itself was followed — less than 50 years later — by the Vichy regime's exclusion of the Jews.

The latest rapprochement between Jews and Catholics is significant. Surprisingly, most of the social and intellectual moves to that end since 1945 have come from the grassroots rather than, as in this case, from the Catholic hierarchy.

No doubt the Pope's desire to pay his debt to the Jews is sincere. But he knows his Church is by no means ready to accept such a step unanimously. Reform has failed to reach everywhere. This is true of Poland, for example, and the Middle East, where Christians dread any gesture by the Vatican that might look like a concession to Israel.

The Vatican's current silence is ascribed by some to the impossibility of "objectifying the unobjectifiable". Might it not then be better to keep quiet rather than expatiate on the sufferings of others? Such a view is bound to be trotted out again in the wake of the Drancy ceremony. But talking about the past will never be in vain, because there will always be revisionists and future generations tempted to forget.

(October 2)

Communists in Japan look to the future

Philippe Pons in Tokyo

THE 21st congress of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), which ended last week, marked the end of an era: 88-year-old Kenji Miyamoto, its leader for almost four decades, bowed out as president of the central committee.

After the deaths of Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung, Miyamoto is the last surviving Asian communist to have been a prominent member of the Comintern. His departure will probably accelerate the JCP's shift to more moderate policies under the stewardship of presidium president Tetsuzo Fuwa and secretary-general Kazuo Shii, to whom Miyamoto handed over the running of the party in 1994.

The congress took two key decisions: that the JCP would be prepared to form part of a coalition government at the beginning of the 21st century, even if it included conservatives; and that relations with the Chinese Communist Party would be normalised.

With 26 deputies (and 5.2 per cent of the vote), the JCP does not carry much weight in parliament, but it is the only opposition party whose popularity has steadily increased. Although its membership is stagnating, the JCP plays a leading role in political debate.

The warmth of press comment on the departing Miyamoto suggests the party still enjoys a certain aura. Despite communism's negative image in Japan, the JCP is respected for its opposition to militarism and its independence in breaking away from Beijing and Moscow in the sixties.

But communist dissidents regarded Miyamoto's party as a monolith that stifled internal debate.

Although Miyamoto brought in new blood in 1990 by appointing Shii, then aged 35, as secretary-general, change was impossible as long as his shadow loomed over the party. Nobody knows if Fuwa and Shii will alter course.

The JCP is unlikely to opt for an Italian-style change of name or to give up "democratic centralism". But a split is opening between the intellectuals and those interested in social action, which will have to be resolved if the JCP is to fulfil its ambition of having 100 deputies by the beginning of the next century.

(September 30)

Serb 'war criminal' heads rights group

Christian Lecomte in Sarajevo

THE decision by the Bosnian parliament to set up a human rights commission is opportune, given the many misdeeds that regularly take place in Bosnia.

However, the Serb appointed to head the commission, Velibor Ostojic, is believed to be a war criminal. Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal has labelled him "the Goebbels of the Bosnian Serbs". Ostojic and Radovan Karadzic, the former leader of the Bosnian Serbs now charged with war crimes, were born in neighbouring villages in Montenegro and are old friends.

The mention of Ostojic's name strikes terror in those who have met him. "He's the man who played football with the decapitated heads of Muslims in Foca in 1992," says Ziba Adilovic, a Muslim woman from that east Bosnian town. She has been unable to sleep properly ever since she heard of the appointment of the man she describes as "the executioner of Foca".

Foca, whose pre-war population of 40,000 was 52 per cent Muslim and 45 per cent Serb, was one of the first Bosnian towns to be taken by Serb forces after ruthless "ethnic cleansing".

A member of Karadzic's secessionist government, Ostojic organised the conquest of Foca by arming Serb militiamen and urging them to rid the town of all non-Serbs. "One day, my neighbour's son disappeared," says Adilovic. "She found his body on the bridge over the Drina river. He had been decapitated, but she recognised his checked shirt."

"Ostojic is in a position of authority, whereas he ought to be tried," says Nedziba, another former inhabitant of Foca, who lost five members of her family.

However, Ostojic's appointment was made democratically. He was eligible to stand for the job because he had been elected to parliament as a deputy for the Serb Democratic party (SDS) in Bosnia's general election in September 1996. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe — which organised the poll and was supposed to weed out any candidates "with a past" — had approved his candidacy.

All deputies in the nationalist parties that make up an overwhelming majority in the Bosnian parliament — the Serb SDS, Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic's Muslim Party for Democratic Action (SDA) and the Croat HDZ — voted for Ostojic by a show of hands.

The SDA now admits that it made a mistake. "We didn't know which candidates we were voting for," says Adnan Janjic, president of the SDA group in the Bosnian parliament. He stood down on September 25 at the request of his party, which wanted to quell the indignation in its ranks.

Ostojic will occupy his post for at least a year. The commission's remit has been extended to include refugees. In other words, liberties in Bosnia will be further restricted and the return home of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons seems increasingly in jeopardy.

(September 30)

Drug money row embroils Mexican Church

Bertrand de la Grange in Mexico City

WHY should the Catholic Church, when it needs money so badly to help the poor, criticise the drug barons for contributing to charities if their donations help to "do good"? That, in essence, was the question asked by Canon Raul Soto in the course of a sermon he gave on September 19 in the church of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It immediately sparked a controversy that the Catholic hierarchy would certainly have preferred to avoid.

As happens every year on the same day, when the 20,000 victims of the Mexico City earthquake 12 years ago are commemorated, hundreds of families had gathered in the church to listen to the clergy's message to all those who lost their lives.

Soto reminded the congregation of the great upsurge of solidarity that followed the tragedy. "Helping one's neighbour is the only way to achieve salvation," he explained.

To illustrate his point, he mentioned the support he had received at the time from Rafael Caro, then the biggest marijuana trafficker, who made generous contributions to the religious organisations in charge of helping earthquake victims.

"Sinners, too, can do good deeds," Soto added. The congregation barely had time to get over their astonishment before he started lauding the "magnificent charitable work" done for his village by the most notorious Mexican drug baron, Amado Carrillo, who died last July after undergoing extensive plastic surgery.

But Soto was quick to add a rider: "One would like to be able to do the same as these rather unsavoury characters. But that doesn't mean the lives of drug traffickers should serve as an example."

Mexican newspapers, which have always kept a close eye on any declarations by prominent churchmen since the restoration of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Vatican in 1992, immediately seized on Soto's clanger.

Do the drug traffickers' budgets include an entry for payments to the Church? they wondered. A rather irritated Archbishop of Mexico City, Monsignor Norberto Rivera, certified that the Church regarded the drug trade "as one of the scourges of humanity" and that he had "personally never received a cent from drug traffickers".

The archbishop suggested to the newspapers that they should demand an explanation from Soto, who is widely recognised as carrying influence within the Church — he is both a professor at the Pontifical University, a member of the ecclesiastical tribunal and a prison chaplain of 45 years' standing.

Far from going back on what he had said, Soto confirmed that what he had meant to say was that "prisoners and sinners were capable of displaying solidarity", which was something that should shock no one.

"As for the dilemma over the problem of drug trafficking, the Church prefers to remain poor rather than receive ill-gotten gains," he said. He did, however, add: "It has to be admitted that [traffickers] have infiltrated the state, the army and perhaps even the Church, which nevertheless remains the least corrupt institution."

Such remarks cannot have been greatly to the liking of the Mexican government, already under great pressure from the United States now that the Mexican cartels have become the main purveyors of Colombian cocaine to the US market.

(September 26)

Moves on child abuse evidence

Maurice Peyrot and Michèle Aulagnon

"DO YOU know why you're here," asked the woman judge. The little girl, clinging to her mother, nodded: "The man attacked me." That was all she could say. The judge asked her mother not to prompt her and went on: "He took your arm?" The girl nodded. "Gently?" She nodded again. And so it went on until the girl, visibly exhausted, let her head loll against her mother.

The silence in court was unprecedented — and unbearable for the reporters and members of the public present. The parents of the girl, who was raped in 1995, had specifically asked for the case to be held in public, and not in camera as it could have been. They hoped the publicity surrounding the case would serve as "a warning" to potential offenders against children. "People mustn't be afraid, or their children too ashamed, to lodge a complaint," they argued.

Yet their child gave only token evidence. Very soon the judge said to her: "You've already come here and seen a man in an office. You told him . . ." And she read out the child's testimony, in which she had told the investigating magistrate that a man in blue overalls, on the stairs of her block of flats, had put "his willy in my mouth".

The act was brief but indisputable, since the girl's cheek had been shown to bear traces of male-specific DNA corresponding to that of the accused and of female-specific DNA contained in her own saliva.

Pascal Bayse, a 43-year-old electrician, did not deny what had happened, but could not remember the whole episode. He had been having professional and emotional problems, and had smoked "a joint" made with zamal, a particularly powerful type of cannabis from Réunion. He started thinking about his girlfriend and masturbated, at which point the little girl appeared. He claimed that it was as he gently pushed her aside that he smeared her cheek. "I don't think I hurt the girl," he said.

Friends and work colleagues came to Bayse's defence. They thought he must have "flipped". Several said they would unhesitatingly ask him to look after their own children, even after what had happened.

Although Bayse had suppressed his memory, he sought no excuses. One thing he was sure of was that he had never desired the girl: "At no point have I felt the slightest sexual desire for children." He seemed shaken by the girl's testimony: "I hadn't been able to see the girl's face. I think that's what I needed. From the depths of my heart, I ask her parents to forgive me."

Dr Serge Bornstein, a psychiatrist, told the court the girl was suffering from after-effects, such as nightmares and crying fits. He hoped that in time things would sort themselves out. But he was worried about the effect on the girl of the media exposure the trial was getting.

The trial, which required that a little girl had to describe, in front of 100 people, how she was sexually attacked two-and-a-half years earlier, illustrates how much suffering could be avoided by the use of video-taped testimony. It is believed that child victims are questioned an average of 10 times (by parents, police, the investigating magistrate, social workers, lawyers and psychiatrists).

Hubert Van Gijseghem, an expert on child sexual abuse, says: "For children, repeating a description of what happened means going through the experience again." By being asked to repeat themselves, they may feel they have not been believed, or not said what adults expected.

With each new questioning session, their account changes and becomes less detailed, sometimes to the point of contradicting the facts, or else gets embroidered with elements suggested by the many questions they have been asked. Repeated questioning can also cause such suffering in the victim that he or she may retract.

Gisjeghem's research helped the French national police college to organise an experiment which showed that the amount of information gathered from the video-taped testimony of a child was three times greater than that obtained by traditional methods.

Because they do not have to take notes, police can to question the child more closely. The video also enables them to put on record various gestures — children may protect their face with their arm to evoke a slap, or put their hands round their neck to simulate an attempted strangling — which are rarely described when statements are taken down by hand.

The sexual delinquency bill now being tabled by the justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, will authorise video and audio recordings of children's evidence. The police are aware of the need for those using such methods to be properly trained. There are also worries about the lack of resources — few police stations and law courts have video cameras at their disposal.

In Paris, a working party made up of magistrates, lawyers and police belonging to the juvenile bureau will meet shortly to look into the question.

"The audio-visual recording of children will raise new issues," says Yvon Tallec, head of the public prosecutor's office in charge of minors. "I fear the impact of the image may be overrated. Clearly there'll be child victims who will 'look the part' and others who won't."

(September 18)

Official anti-ETA video angers Basque nationalists

From a correspondent in Madrid

THE Spanish interior ministry has just produced a 15-minute video cassette on the armed Basque separatist organisation, ETA. El Rostro De La Eta (The Face Of ETA) opens with black-and-white pictures of hooded marksmen training in some unidentified part of the Spanish countryside. The video, which has caused uproar in Basque nationalist circles, is about to be sent out to Spanish embassies in 17 countries.

These include, on top of European Union member states, Latin American countries that may be sheltering ETA members, such as Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, as well as the United States and Morocco.

José Maria Aznar's government hopes to make both public opinion and the authorities in those countries more aware of the situation in the Basque country, and "make up for inadequate information" about ETA and its "political wing", Herri Batasuna (HB). The timing is deliberate: on October 6, 23 HB leaders will be tried in Madrid on charges of "defending terrorism" and "collusion with an armed gang". HB has also organised an international campaign to muster opposition to a trial that it describes as "political".

The interior ministry video, which will be passed on by embassies to the governments and leading media in the 17 countries concerned, has been broadcast in its entirety by two Spanish TV channels.

The violence depicted on the video has caused bad feeling between the Basque and the central government. It shows corpses, mutilated bodies, wrecked vehicles and pools of blood resulting from ETA's most murderous attacks, along with other powerful images such as that of the last ETA hostage freed by police after being held and starved for 532 days, shown side by side with a shockingly thin Buchenwald survivor and captioned "1945-1997".

There is grim music on the sound track as the screen is filled with the statistic: "ETA: 761 dead, including 19 children, since 1968." The commentary explains that Spain, a modern democracy for the past 20 years, has carried out major reforms, including the establishment of 17 autonomous regions.

The visuals illustrate this new Spain — a country that has high-speed TGV trains, is an EU member and hosts Nato summits, but which has also given the Basque Country a very high degree of autonomy.

But, the commentary goes on, ETA, a "Mafia-like terrorist gang", still kills people. The video shows masked men burning the Spanish and French flags at an HB meeting. Its aim is to sabotage HB's international campaign to muster support.

The HB leaders are accused of having distributed an ETA video cassette at election meetings in 1996 and of having justified certain ETA murders. HB points out that it is a legal party that represents 15 per cent of the electorate in the Basque Country.

It claims to have the support of 700 prominent figures, half of them outside Spain. They are thought to include the Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, and the Plaza de Mayo grandmothers in Buenos Aires. HB has insisted that 20 international observers should attend the trial, which is giving the Spanish political community the jitters.

In answer to Basque nationalists, who have pressed for the video to be withdrawn and accused the government of painting a terrifying picture both of the Basque Country and of Spain, the interior minister, Jaime Mayor, retorted: "The pictures may be hard to take, but reality is even harder to take."

His arguments have failed to convince the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which governs the Basque Country and whose relations with the central government have taken a sharp turn for the worse in recent weeks.

Its leader, Javier Arzalluz, said on September 22: "The PNV and Aznar's People's Party are now no longer bound by the pact they signed in 1996." Madrid's refusal to allow the Basque government to run its own National Institute for Employment was seen as the last straw. A PNV spokesperson has described the anti-ETA video as "a perverse use of violence".

(September 26)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Capitalism speaks in only one tongue

English as the language of business has prompted a teaching boom in Eastern Europe, says **John Hughes**

ASK any university student in the new capitalist economies of Central and Eastern Europe what they are studying and it seems that well over half reply "Economics". Having been an English teacher in Eastern Europe for a number of years, I tend only to meet students who are also learning English; where you meet a student of economics, you will most assuredly meet a student of English. The difference, however, is that where an economics degree is currently in vogue and at the height of fashion, learning and speaking English is simply a matter of career survival.

Pick up a newspaper in Prague or Budapest and most advertisements in the professional jobs section will be in English. In many cases the whole recruitment process — from letter of application to interview to job offer — is in English, especially where the position is with one of the many branches of international firms now operating in this part of the world. So, while economics graduates may never have to dust off their course notes again, they may well be forever brushing up their English to keep their jobs and move up the career ladder.

The boom in English language learning has put a huge strain on state education, and has led to a thriving network of private language schools. Since 1989, teachers of Russian have been cramming English in order to teach the new lingua franca and preserve their jobs. In Poland, the British Council in conjunction with the Ministry of Education hopes to have trained enough teachers by 2001 to satisfy the estimated 20,000-30,000 needed. Meanwhile state schools remain ill-equipped to cope with demand, so Polish parents accept it as a matter of course that their children attend extra English classes after school. Currently, more than 70 per cent of those enrolling at private language schools are aged under 18. Naturally, many state-trained teachers of English are slipping away from poorly paid state schools into full-time posts in the private sector.

Local teachers often have a high level of English, but teachers from Britain or a country whose native language is English will have no problems finding work. It is still possible for the unqualified backpacker to be approached and offered a job. Such a style of recruitment was commonplace among language schools during the early nineties. The schools set up at the end of the cold war were often formed by state education teachers who hired classrooms from their day-time employers and ran classes in the evening to supplement their meagre salaries.

It quickly became clear to them that native speakers of English were a strong selling point, particularly for teaching higher levels. Finances would not allow the school to recruit teachers from Britain through the pages of the Guardian or Times Educational Supplement. And so, by employing the passing (untrained) traveller with a few months to spare, private language schools satisfied the (misguided and now changing) customer belief that a native speaker is the best kind of teacher. Salaries then were no higher than the local rate and it was common to find yourself working alongside teachers from voluntary organisations such as Britain's Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and the American Peace Corps.

Nowadays, teachers in search of a quick fortune do not put ex-communist Europe at the top of their destination list. However, by working in one of the large cities such as Warsaw a teacher may be able to earn a wage that is only 15 per cent less than would be paid in Italy, according to one British EFL recruitment agency. Teachers also often discover that they are working for schools that are professionally-run, customer-orientated businesses that provide all the services one would expect from the developed EFL markets of Madrid or Milan. Indeed, many who have worked in Mediterranean countries and move to Eastern Europe will vouch that the quality of schools is often noticeably higher.

The commitment among many schools to quality may stem in part from the Central-Eastern European pride in having some of the highest literacy rates in the world. The Hungarian Chamber of Language Schools and the Polish Associations for Standards in English are two organisations dedicated to achieving and maintaining standards within language schools. They run schemes aiming to guarantee a level of pedagogic quality, favourable terms and conditions for teachers and the provision of effective managerial structures. By proving this status through visits from outside auditors, schools gain the right to bear the scheme's logo on their publicity material.

This has obvious benefits to both prospective students and teachers. In striving for academic excellence, a recognised school may offer its employees the chance to take teacher training courses and internationally recognised TEFL qualifications. It is as possible now to get a CTEFLA or a DTEFLA in Krakow as it is in London.

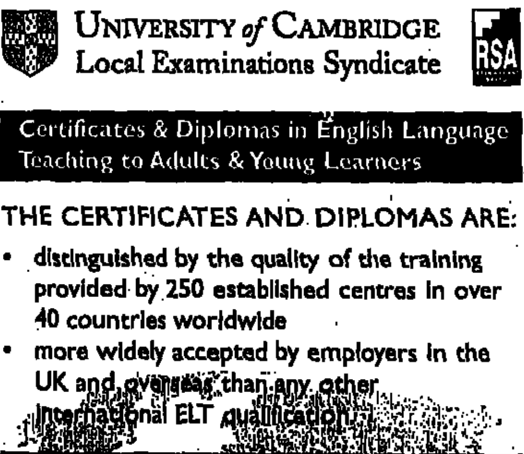
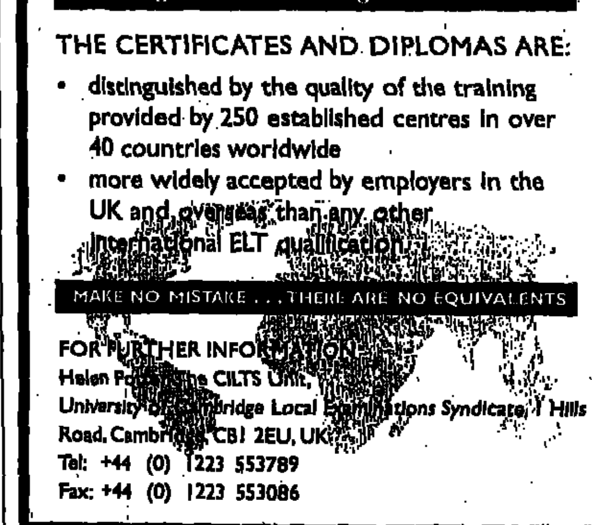
SCHOOLS send teachers to conferences and workshops of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), which has branches in many Eastern European countries. Last year, the fifth Polish conference had 800 participants from 13 different countries. A glance down the page of a list of conference participants will reveal place-names such as Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Bulgaria and Slovakia.

Although the money teachers earn may go a long way, the standard of living in Eastern Europe can be poor in terms of air quality, housing and food. Nevertheless, good private schools will pay air fares, find accommodation and organise work permits.

The arrival of big language-teaching chains such as Berlitz and Linguarama has forced local language schools to give up their joyfully precarious management methods for streamlined systems of administration. The legendary Kafkaesque bureaucracy does exist, but for most schools this is as a product of laws and officialdom that is slow to change. The schools themselves, having realised that they must compete to survive, have turned owner-teachers into marketing managers, sales reps and accountants.

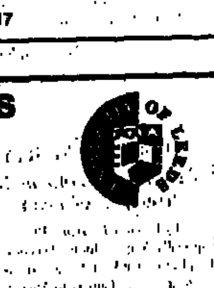
Recognising this need for management know-how brought schools from all over Eastern Europe together in 1996 to hold the first ELT management conference. Originally it was conceived as a meeting ground for English language schools to discuss the issues facing people with no experience of Western business methods. This year the conference in Budapest attracted interest not only from the East but the Far East as well, and future conferences will be open to managers and owners from countries all over the world. It seems, therefore, that in the world of ELT, a part of the globe that is usually looking elsewhere for ideas may at last be having its ideas looked at by the world.

John Hughes was director of studies for Business English in a Polish language school.
If you are an EFL teacher and have useful advice you wish to share with others, feel free to submit an article of no more than 1,000 words to the Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Rd, London EC1M 3HQ, UK (E-mail address: weekly@guardian.co.uk or Fax: +44-171-242 0985). We hope to publish the best article in the next TEFL supplement in January

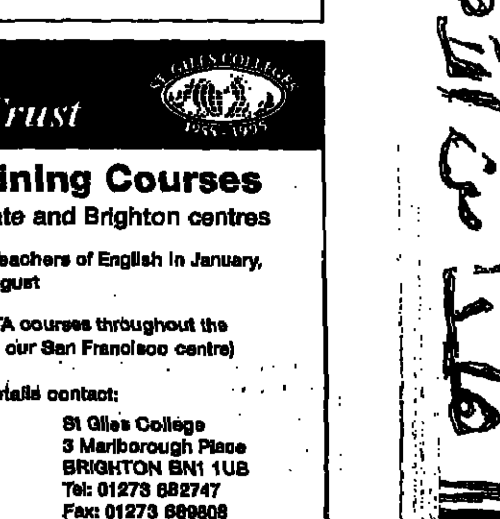














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Essential requirements for this position include:

- Several years experience in poverty alleviation or emergency relief work.
- Gender-aware management, administration and human resource development experience, preferably with non-governmental organizations.
- Willingness to travel frequently, sometimes to remote areas.
- Good communication, reporting and negotiating skills in English
- Commitment to Oxfam's goals.

Knowledge of Chinese would be highly desirable. Current salary scale is HK$38,500-$44,677 per month

Please send your application and CV to the Assistant to the Director, Oxfam Hong Kong, 9/F1, 191 Woosung Street, Jordan, Kowloon, Hong Kong or by fax to 2527-6307. Closing date for application: 5 November 1997. Interviews will be held in HK on 26-28 November.

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Department of Epidemiology & Population Health

Maternal and Child Epidemiology Unit

Senior Lecturer In International Child Health

The Maternal and Child Epidemiology Unit is a multidisciplinary group which addresses international health problems of women and children. We are seeking a senior individual to take a leading role in the Unit's child health research, with considerable research experience, preferably related to the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (in particular health provider performance or maternal health seeking behaviour) or in the design and evaluation of community interventions for major child health problems. We welcome applications from a range of disciplinary backgrounds.

The post is tenable from January 1998 for five years. It is a senior lectureship with salary in the range £31,639-£35,462 (non-clinical) or £35,500-£49,892 (clinical). Where appropriate a conferred title may be sought for more experienced candidates.

Informal enquiries may be made to Sharon Huttly (0171 927 2162). Further details are available from the Personnel Office (Tel: 0171 927 2203; Fax: 0171 636 4771; email: personnel@lshtm.ac.uk) Applications with CV and details of three referees should be sent to the Personnel Officer, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, WC1E 7HT by 24th October 1997, quoting reference SH1.

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is an equal opportunities employer.

Regional Advisor - Redd Barna

Redd Barna, Save the Children Norway, invites applications for a Regional Advisor, based in Kampala, Uganda. Redd Barna has country programmes in Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Regional Advisor will be responsible to a management team of the Resident Representatives of the three countries, and report to the Resident Representative in Uganda.

Tasks

- Assist in strengthening programmes by transferring lessons learnt within the region and outside.
  Develop Redd Barna competence within the identified focus areas; advocacy of children's rights and basic education in particular, but also psycho-social support to children in war affected areas, support to children who are sexually or economically exploited.
- Training and facilitation within these areas.
- Documentation of lessons learnt and networking.

Qualifications

- Graduate in education, social sciences or related fields.
- 5-10 years of experience in developing countries, preferably in Africa.
- Preferably experience from basic education and/or children's rights.
- Documentation and/or training skills.

Terms

The position is on a two-year contract, possibly renewable. Terms and conditions are negotiable within frames for international staff in Redd Barna.

Applications to reach the Resident Representative, Redd Barna Uganda, P.O. Box 12018, Kampala, Uganda, before November 15th, 1997. E-mail address, rbu@imul.com. Only an application including contact address or telephone number of 3 reference persons as well as a CV should be sent initially. Testimonials, diplomas, etc. will be requested at a later date.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Classics

Applications are invited for the following newly established posts in the Faculty of Classics:

University Lecturer or Assistant Lecturer in Classics (Greco-Roman Art)

Applications for this post (to start on 1 October 1998) are invited from candidates with a specialised interest in the history of Greek and Roman art. The aim of the post is to develop new areas of research and teaching in the history of art, within the more general context of ancient cultural history. It is expected that the interests of the person appointed will extend into other fields, such as art history in general, or the broader material culture of Greece and Rome, or ancient history, or Classical literature. This would complement and reinforce the Faculty's existing interdisciplinary strengths, and would provide a focus for a distinguished and attractive teaching programme in Greco-Roman art at all levels.

University Lecturer or Assistant Lecturer in Classics (Linguistics and Philology)

Applications for this post (to start on 1 October 1998) are invited from suitably qualified and experienced candidates. The Linguistics and Philology section of the Faculty is responsible for teaching descriptive linguistics of Greek and Latin for Part I of the Classical Tripos, and the historical linguistics of the two languages and comparative linguistics of the Indo-European languages for Part II, as well as for supervising graduate students working in these fields. The successful candidate will be required to take a full part in these activities and to engage in research relevant to the teaching programme.

For both posts the scale of stipends is £19,372 - £29,875 for a University Lecturer and £16,045 - £21,016 for a University Assistant Lecturer.

Further particulars of either post may be obtained from the Secretary of the Appointments Committee, Dr GM King, Faculty of Classics, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA (e-mail: gmk20@cam.ac.uk). The closing date for applications, which should include a detailed curriculum vitae and list of publications together with the names of two or three referees, is 31 October 1997. Referees should be asked to write directly to the Secretary to reach her by the closing date. There is no application form.

The University follows an equal opportunities policy.

Center Director

Center for Wildlife Management Studies - Athi River, Kenya
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Center for Marine Resources - South Caicos, British West Indies
Center for Rainforest Studies - Yungaburra, Queensland, Australia

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QUALIFICATIONS: PhD or Masters in a relevant field, 5 + years of demonstrated upper level management experience, entrepreneurial ability, and proven experience with the following: institution building; fundraising; teaching college aged students; budget management; project management; giving presentations; running academic or similar programs; and heading environmental issue driven projects, programs or organizations. Must have the desire and drive to develop and head a school along with the ability to articulate the direction for the Center and the ability to travel up to 50% of the time and the lifestyle to live on site the other times. Experience of working and living in Kenya, Australia, Baja Mexico or the Caribbean under field conditions preferred.

TO APPLY: Send a detailed letter explaining research experience, interests and ...ls, CV with names and telephone numbers of 3 references to:

Trudy Cullen
Center Director Search
The School for Field Studies
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Beverly, MA 01915
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HealthNet International is implementing an innovative and respected malaria and leishmaniasis control programme in Afghanistan and Pakistan based on appropriate technology. To expand coverage we intend to increase our team of health professionals over the next six months.

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- Vector control manager (Kabul), an entomologist to run leishmaniasis control campaigns, and to conduct research on sandfly control. Available from January 1998.
- Project manager (Kabul), a clinician or epidemiologist to coordinate the leishmaniasis control and treatment services. Available from March 1998
- Programme director (Peshawar), to coordinate the various control and research projects. Available from March 1998.

HealthNet International is an NGO that provides health care in the aftermath of crisis, between the phases of emergency relief and sustainable development.

Qualifications: An appropriate health degree, overseas managerial experience, experience in the control of vector borne disease is desirable.

For further information and job descriptions contact: Judith Zaal, HealthNet International, Singel 540, 1017 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: (31) 20 420 1116 Fax: (31) 20 4 20 1503, e-mail: judith@hni.nl.

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Opportunities abroad

Social Development Adviser

The British Council in India is seeking an experienced Health Social Development Adviser for its Field Management Office (FMO).

The Health FMO manages a portfolio of the Department for International Development (DFID) funded projects in the health and population sector concentrating on primary health care, control of major communicable diseases such as Malaria, TB and AIDS and rehabilitation of the disabled. Two major projects are concerned with health systems development in the state of Orissa, and malaria control and research in Gujarat.

Duties and responsibilities: the Social Development Adviser will work as a full member of the FMO team which supports partner organisation to achieve their objectives. The successful applicant will provide specialist social development analysis, advice and management inputs leading to the successful implementation of the programme; to focus particularly on the means and methods of project interventions and take up of health services; ensure participation of the poor and women in all aspects of project activities and enable project partners to realise these objectives.

Qualifications and experience: the successful applicant will hold a relevant first degree and a higher degree in a relevant social science discipline such as Social Anthropology, Sociology or Social Planning. Several years experience of working overseas is required preferably in India or South Asia. S/he will be competent in social development planning, gender, community based participation, poverty reduction, social policy and health, population, family welfare.

Essential skills include: strong interpersonal and communication; facilitation and analytical abilities; evidence of working in a multi-disciplinary team and working with project stakeholders including central government and national institutions; a sound understanding of the processes of managing change.

The post will involve extensive travel within India.

Salary: a competitive salary will be offered based on qualifications and experience.

Contract: initially for two years commencing January 1998, renewable.

As this post holds diplomatic status all applicants must hold UK nationality.

Closing date for applications: 29 October 1997.

Interviews: to be held in Manchester.

Post reference: 97/N/010.

Requests for further details and application form, quoting post reference and enclosing an A4 sae (39p) to: Overseas Appointments Services, The British Council, Bridgewater House, 58 Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 6BB.

Telephone: (0161) 957 7383, fax: (0161) 957 7397, e-mail: Mark.Hepworth@britcoun.org

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Abbreviations: P - Professor; AP - Associate Professor; ASP - Assistant Professor; SL - Senior Lecturer; L - Lecturer; AL - Assistant Lecturer; PDF - Postdoctoral Fellow

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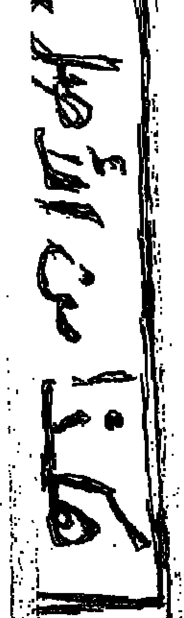
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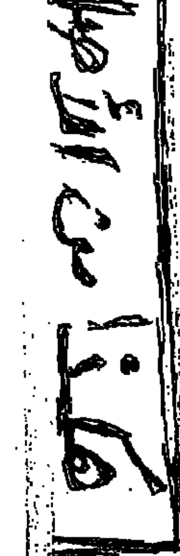
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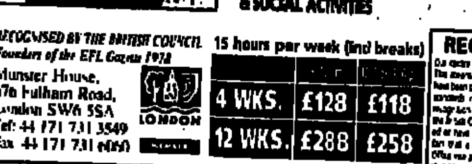


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Essential requirements for this position include:

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Please send your application and C.V. to the Assistant to the Director, Oxfam Hong Kong, 9/F1 191 Woosung Street, Jordan, Kowloon, Hong Kong or by fax to 2527-6307. Closing date for application: 5 November 1997. Interviews will be held in HK on 26-28 November.

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The post is tenable from January 1998 for five years. It is a senior lectureship with salary in the range £31,639-£35,462 (non-clinical) or £35,500-£49,892 (clinical). Where appropriate a conferred title may be sought for more experienced candidates.

Informal enquiries may be made to Sharon Huttly (0171 927 2182). Further details are available from the Personnel Office (Tel: 0171 927 2203; Fax: 0171 636 4771; email: personnel@lshtm.ac.uk) Applications with CV and details of three referees should be sent to the Personnel Officer, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, WC1E 7HT by 24th October 1997, quoting reference SH1.

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- Training and facilitation within these areas.
- Documentation of lessons learnt and networking.

Qualifications
- Graduate in education, social sciences or related fields.
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- Preferably experience from basic education and/or children's rights.
- Documentation and/or training skills.

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The position is on a two-year contract, possibly renewable. Terms and conditions are negotiable within frames for international staff in Redd Barna.

Applications to reach the Resident Representative, Redd Barna Uganda, P.O. Box 12018, Kampala, Uganda, before November 15th, 1997. E-mail address, rbu@imul.com. Only an application including contact address or telephone number of 3 reference persons as well as a CV should be sent initially. Testimonials, diplomas, etc. will be requested at a later date.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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For both posts the scale of stipends is £19,372 - £29,875 for a University Lecturer and £16,045 - £21,016 for a University Assistant Lecturer.

Further particulars of either post may be obtained from the Secretary of the Appointments Committee, Dr GM King, Faculty of Classics, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA (e-mail: gmk20@cam.ac.uk). The closing date for applications, which should include a detailed curriculum vitae and list of publications together with the names of two or three referees, is 31 October 1997. Referees should be asked to write directly to the Secretary to reach her by the closing date. There is no application form.

The University follows an equal opportunities policy.

Center Director

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START DATE: JANUARY 1998

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TO APPLY: Send a detailed letter explaining research experience, interests and skills, CV with names and telephone numbers of 3 references to:

Trudy Cullen
Center Director Search
The School for Field Studies
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- Project manager (Kabul), a clinician or epidemiologist to coordinate the leishmaniasis control and treatment services. Available from March 1998
- Programme director (Peshawar), to coordinate the various control and research projects. Available from March 1998.

HealthNet International is an NGO that provides health care in the aftermath of crisis; between the phases of emergency relief and sustainable development.

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For further information and job descriptions contact: Judith Zaal, HealthNet International, Singel 540, 1017 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: (31) 20 420 1115 Fax: (31) 20 4 20 1503, e-mail: judith@hni.nl.

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Opportunities abroad

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Duties and responsibilities: the Social Development Adviser will work as a full member of the FMO team which supports partner organisation to achieve their objectives. The successful applicant will provide specialist social development analysis, advice and management inputs leading to the successful implementation of the programme; to focus particularly on the means and methods of project interventions and take up of health services; ensure participation of the poor and women in all aspects of project activities and enable project partners to realise these objectives.

Qualifications and experience: the successful applicant will hold a relevant first degree and a higher degree in a relevant social science discipline such as Social Anthropology, Sociology or Social Planning. Several years experience of working overseas is required preferably in India or South Asia. S/he will be competent in social development planning, gender, community based participation, poverty reduction, social policy and health, population, family welfare.

Essential skills include: strong interpersonal and communication; facilitation and analytical abilities; evidence of working in a multi-disciplinary team and working with project stakeholders including central government and national institutions; a sound understanding of the processes of managing change.

The post will involve extensive travel within India.

Salary: a competitive salary will be offered based on qualifications and experience.

Contract: initially for two years commencing January 1998, renewable.

As this post holds diplomatic status all applicants must hold UK nationality.

Closing date for applications: 29 October 1997.

Interviews: to be held in Manchester.

Post reference: 97/N/010.

Requests for further details and application form, quoting post reference and enclosing an A4 sae (39p) to: Overseas Appointments Services, The British Council, Bridgewater House, 58 Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 6BB.

Telephone: (0161) 957 7383, fax: (0161) 957 7397, e-mail: Mark.Hepworth@britcoun.org

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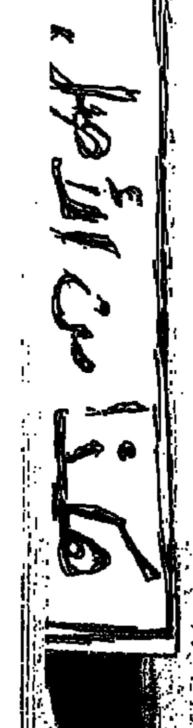
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For further details of any of the above staff vacancies please contact the ACU (Advertising), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, UK (Internat. tel. +44 171 813 3024 [24 hour answerphone]; fax +44 171 813 3055; e-mail: appts@acu.ac.uk), quoting reference number of post(s). Details will be sent by airmail/first class post. A sample copy of the publication *Appointments in Commonwealth Universities*, including subscription details, is available from the same source.




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CAR HIRE

Is modern French philosophy just a load of pseudo-scientific claptrap?

Jon Henley in Paris

ONLY in France do postmodern structuralists and relativist post-structural modernists become television stars. Only in Paris can people seriously state their profession as thinker. And only on the Left Bank could a slim but plain-speaking volume by two foreign scientists cause quite such an uproar.

American Alan Sokal and Belgian Jean Bricmont have dared to say what no one else would: modern French philosophy is a load of old tosh.

"Our aim is to say that the emperor has no clothes," the pair write in the introduction to Impostures Intellectuelles, published this week but already a topic of furious — and unfathomable — debate in the cafés of the Latin Quarter.

"We want to 'deconstruct' the reputation that these texts have of being difficult because they are deep. We show that if they seem incomprehensible, it is for the very good reason that they have nothing to say."

The authors — a physics professor at New York University and a theoretical physicist from the University of Louvain — slaughter one by one the sacred cows of contemporary French thought, from the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and the semiotician Julia Kristeva to Bruno Latour, the scientific sociologist, and the prominent leftwing philosopher Régis Debray.

"They talk abundantly of scientific theories of which they have, at best, a very vague understanding. They display a superficial erudition by throwing words at the reader in a context where they have no relevance. They demonstrate a veritable intoxication with words, combined with a superb indifference to their meaning," the pair write.

Quoting extensively from some of France's greatest minds, Mr Sokal and Mr Bricmont set about systematically demolishing their writings as deliberately obscure, excessively convoluted, pseudo-scientific claptrap.

Jacques Lacan, one of the best-known psychoanalysts of the century, is criticised for "arbitrarily mixing key words of mathematical theory, without in the least caring about their meaning".

The authors take particular exception to one of Mr Lacan's lesser-known theories, in which he argues that "the erect male organ, not as itself, not even as image, but as the missing piece of the desired image, is thus equal to the square root of -1 of the highest produced meaning".

In attempting to construct a mathematical formula for poetic language, Ms Kristeva, too, is guilty of "trying to impress the reader with scientific words which she manifestly does not understand".

"She has a vague idea of what she is talking about, but not much," they write.

The works of Gilles Deleuze, a leading contemporary French philosopher who died recently, are "principally characterised by their lack of clarity . . . stuffed with very technical terms used out of context, and with no apparent logic".

And of Jean Baudrillard, an influential sociologist and regular columnist for Libération newspaper, the authors conclude: "In the final analysis, one could ask what would actually remain of Baudrillard's thoughts if one removed the verbose veneer that cloaks them."

Unsurprisingly, the unprecedented attack has inflamed the Left Bank, home to the cream of France's intellectuals since the days of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, and prompted outrage in the press.

"This is war," the daily newspaper Le Figaro proclaimed, while the front cover of the weekly news magazine Le Nouvel Observateur demanded: "Are our philosophers imposters?"

Stung, thinkers have hastened to respond. "What's the point of such a polemic, so far removed from present-day preoccupations?" asked Ms Kristeva. "It's an anti-French intellectual escapade."

Writer Roger-Pol Droit saw the broadside as part of a sinister new vogue for "scientific, as opposed to political, correctness".

It is clear the philosophers have been shaken. In the words of another of the book's targets, the psychoanalyst Felix Guattari, "Existence, as a process of deterritorialisation, is a specific intermechanic operation which superimposes itself on the promotion of singularised existential intensities. It is barely livable."

Truth's false hope

Theologian Don Cupitt offers an escape route for scientists suffering from a complex about God, writes **Gail Vines**

THE Oxford Union wants to sign Don Cupitt for a rerun of its classic debate on science versus religion, a sparring match for possession of the crown of "truth". But the radical Cambridge theologian doesn't want to play. "Not again," he groans. "Why are we still doing this after a hundred years?" What Cupitt wants to see is a revolution in our conceptions of both science and God. "We must abandon the myth of ready-made immutable truths out there," he says, "and recognise that we ourselves tell all the stories." In the closing years of the 20th century, science and theology have much in common, he argues: both need to outgrow their old love affair with "truth".

This is fighting talk to Britain's leading media scientists, who like nothing better than to paint science and religion as polar opposites. In his recent book, In The Blood, geneticist Steve Jones claims that "science and religion, have in the end rather little to do with each other". He portrays their relationship as a battle between a religious shark and a scientific tiger, each invincible in its own element. Yet, according to Jones, the shark's habitat — "the ocean of ignorance" — is fast disappearing.

In Cupitt's view, the tiger is also endangered, and for similar reasons. "Making science into a new sort of religious dogma won't do the world any good at all." The Oxford chemist Peter Atkins once famously trashed the traditional religious opposition with the remark that being a professor of theology was like having a chair in fantasy studies. Cupitt probably wouldn't disagree: he himself doesn't believe in the objective existence of a God. Yet he would also want to suggest that Atkins's own grip on "reality" is rather less secure than he supposes.

He claims scientists are in danger of assuming theology's discredited mantle of authority; the myth of "absolute truth", the God's-eye point of view still holds great appeal. "Dreams of a final 'theory of everything' in physics, just like the overblown claims made for the human genome project, perpetuate old theological myths of perfect happiness through total knowledge and total control of reality," he says. Such "grandiose totalising dreams" show science trying to become itself a new theology: "It's as if science thinks it has to present itself as dogma, as big science offering big truth, to convince politicians to fund it."

Cupitt's first love was biology before he was ordained as a priest in 1959. He understands the attractions of both systems of belief. "When I was in my teens the leading cultural influences of the day were Sartre's existentialism, a rather aggressive scientism and popular neo-orthodox Christianity. I was influenced strongly by all three." The three schools of thought all advocated a metaphysics of spiritual individualism, preaching the superiority of disengagement from, and transcendence of, the ordinary day-to-day world. Apparently, only by adopting a detached Olympian stance could one conquer the world — gaining objective knowledge of the truth, and communion with God.

He abandoned Anglican orthodoxy almost 20 years ago, publishing a powerful tract entitled Taking Leave Of God, followed in the mid-1980s by a landmark book and TV series called The Sea Of Faith. He has written 25 books in as many years, and despite health problems, his output remains prodigious. His latest book, After God: The Future Of Religion, has just been published, and two more — on mysticism and on the philosopher Martin Heidegger's idea of "being" — are due out next year. Cupitt categorises his present religious views as "eclectic and improvised — 50 per cent Christian, 20 per cent Jewish, 30 per cent Buddhist".

"The tragedy for Christianity", says Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "is that Cupitt has been relentlessly marginalised by his own church." Journalist Gerald Kelly, writing in the Times Higher Education Supplement, comments: "He has dared to rethink all that is sacred — the nature of faith, the meaning of God, the role of religion — in an endearingly demotic style that has earned him an audience beyond academe and some disdain within it. For Cupitt, God is an ideal, a focus to live by, not a superbeing whose existence has to be proved; . . . and religion should be a guide for living, not a preparation for dying."

If it is to survive in the contemporary world, religion must be viewed not as truth, but as a set of spiritual tools, says Cupitt, enhancing our lives in the way that the arts do.

All this is something to celebrate, to welcome, says Cupitt — people no longer want to find our answers ready made, all our problems solved by allegiance to some creed, or even some scientific authority. "We deny any queen of the sciences, whether theology or physics; we don't want to privilege any particular way to truth," he says. Far better to adopt "a cheerfully pragmatic view of science", using its ways of thinking without becoming slaves to them. Religion, morality and art can then become consciously corrective. "They will set out to counteract, and to liberate us from, the ways we must think in our technological and bureaucratic culture. By all means let us look at a sunset with the eyes of a physicist when it is appropriate to do so, but as a corrective let us learn also to look at a sunset with the eyes of a Turner."

Cupitt rejects the idea of a one-truth universe, teaching instead what he calls "cosmic democracy: everything is seen as depending upon open debate, healthy institutions, and a human consensus refreshed by frequent injections of new metaphors, new valuations, new angles. If the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, the price of truth is endless openness to criticism and innovation." He reckons that our strongest hold on the world lies in our acknowledging our limitations.

"I love science, I started as a scientist. But I would like a science that is less orientated towards power and control, and more able to be imaginative, pluralistic and self-critical," he says. "Science only exists in living communities where people keep arguing and changing their minds." He adds: "We should resist the temptation to claim some sort of objective or supernatural origins for our knowledge systems."

Cupitt sees the growth of fundamentalist religious movements as a protest against a world that attributes supreme value to technical advance and economic growth. But he believes their solution is wrong. "The answer is not to try to go back in time; third millennium people will not live with a medieval outlook."

FOR Cupitt, religion remains "humanly necessary" — only a truly liberated religious imagination can generate the visions of the good life and of the good society that we need. From this perspective, faith comes to signify the conviction that we can give meanings to life beyond those generated by a globalised marketplace.

Once, the Church repressed questioning to protect its own power, says Cupitt. "Today the same repression continues under the hegemony of the technological rationality that seeks to reduce all the questions of life to technical problems, all education to technical education, and all knowledge to technical skills," he argues.

But is there a future for other world views? Cupitt is not entirely optimistic. In the wake of the enormous resources allocated to techno-science today, modern philosophers or religious thinkers cannot hope to produce a serious rival to the modern scientific world picture. No alternative "view of life or system of thought has the sort of worldwide cogency and attractiveness as our natural science and the technologies based on it," he says. But just as painters, "beaten" by photographers, learnt to paint in new, "post-realist" ways, so religious thinkers and philosophers can show "what it is to live religiously or to think philosophically: what needs we are trying to meet, and what questions we try to answer".

Cupitt: cheerfully pragmatic view of science — PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

Don Cupitt's After God: The Future of Religion is published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £11.99

Wild spirit of Tuscany

Paul Evans.

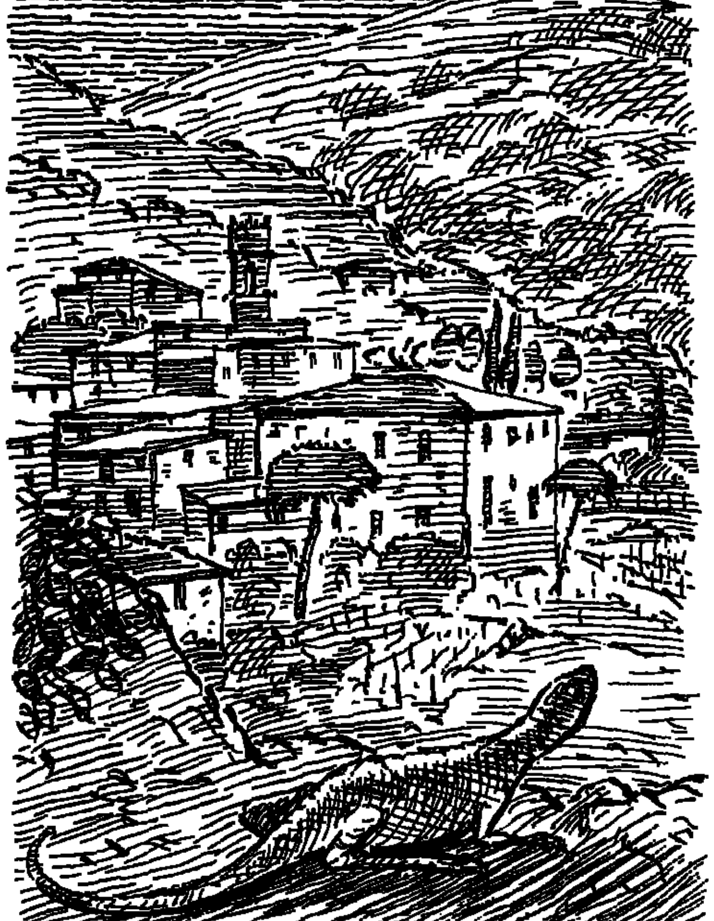


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

CLANG, dong, clang . . . the bells of ridgetop churches ring out with a truly Tuscan attitude: relaxed and timeless, a redolence rich and warm with chianti grapes ripening at harvest-time. A lone buzzard mews its own chimes high above, riding the thermals of a sunny afternoon. The buzzard scans the world below — the mosaic of olive groves, vineyards, rolling ploughed fields, exclamatory cypresses and deep woods. We read the same landscape using different languages.

Through the olive grove forage a small posse of rock partridge. These plump, greyish birds with red legs and a clear black band which crosses their eyes like a burglar's mask and meets under their white throats are found in rocky evergreen forests and scrub in the hill country of Italy and Greece. They're also found, I suspect, plucked and plasticked in the local supermarket. The rock partridge colours fit perfectly with the olives and cypresses and they have that fashionable, slightly superior, Florentine walk that seems to have stepped straight out of a Renaissance fresco.

Everything in Tuscany seems to be ripening; you can taste it in the air. A fig tree mutters in the dry rattly breeze, its milky sap suckling the green bullets of fruit to rich wine-purple. But these just plop to earth like droppings, unpicked. Those who do give a fig are the early-morning jays and the wasps and butterflies which blunder drunkenly away from the mess of fallen fruit.

Famous for the fecundity of its culinary delights, everything in this part of Italy seems to be on someone's menu. The woods which clothe the ridges and precipitous ravines are also home to wild boar. Boar hunting is beginning and vantage points in the undergrowth have been cleared by hunters. Beneath a canopy of oak, ash, elm and pine live laurel and spiny, evergreen butcher's broom. In dappled sunlight, cyclamen with pink to white upswept petals bloom.

Out in the open, the heat of the afternoon buzzes dreamily with crickets and cicadas which are echoed by the engines of motor scooters and little three-wheeler vans laden with buckets of tomatoes and boxes of grapes, labouring up the hill. Suddenly materialising, lizards, with heads high, backs long and tails tramlined into the electricity of the earth, flash with meteor speed. A shiny black scorpion wanders slowly across a doorstep, visiting the dark corners of a sunstruck afternoon, trafficking some ancient myth.

Darkness falls quickly. A fox emerges from a bramble patch, yawns, then sets off for the nocturnal life that everyone else in Italy seems to be preparing for. Later, the sky shakes with white flashes and explosions as thousands of fireworks flower under the stars. This is the exuberance of a Tuscan harvest festival. In the spirit of this ancient landscape, the fertility of nature and the labours of its people are celebrated with fire and noise. Out of the wooded shadows, behind the slow, peaceful façade of daytime, Tuscany's wine and food come from this wild spirit, like a great wild boar charging through the night.

Chess Leonard Barden

BACK in 1982, Anatoly Karpov gave a 25-board simul against the England junior squad. The opposition was hot: future GMs Hodgson and King were on the top boards, and Conquest, Gallagher and Howell were lower down.

Even the bottom board, Edward Lee, was selected to deliver a surprise punch at the end of the world champion's tours of the hall: he had won his six previous simuls against GMs, and Karpov became his seventh victim.

Karpov realised he had to work, fought his way out of some poor positions and emerged after six hours with +12 = 8 – 5, which he admitted was the worst result of his life.

In 1986, Kasparov played the same squad. It was summer exam time, the team was weaker, so Kasparov's +9 = 8 – 3 was less convincing than Karpov's results. He even lost his temper with one opponent, claiming wrongly that the junior's draw offer was a breach of Fide rules. Spectators of both events rightly concluded that the next world championship series would be closely fought.

A few weeks ago, K and K had a similar head-to-head simul, but the outcome was very different. Karpov, playing eight Chinese boys and eight girls in Beijing, could score only +5 = 9 – 2, and then lost +1 = 3 – 2 in a clock match against the boys.

Kasparov met far stronger opposition: the Argentine Olympiad team, most of them 2,500-rated grandmasters, in Buenos Aires. His result (+6 = 5 – 1) and games were impressive, and if the simuls are a guide, Karpov hasn't a hope if they play another match.

Kasparov v Spangenberg

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 Nc6?! b5 is a more critical test of the white formation.

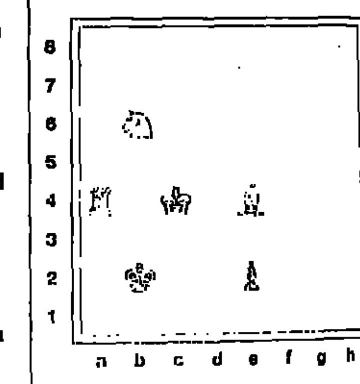
8 Nc3 Be7 9 Qe2 0-0 10 Rd1 **cxd4 11 Nxd4 Nxd4 12** exd4 **Nd5** Black's position is already difficult. In many lines, White can break up the centre by d4-d5, while Kasparov's delayed development of his c1 bishop means that this piece can track the BQ whether it moves to a5, b6 or c7.

13 Qf3! Breaking up Black's attempted blockade. Nxc3 14 bxc3 **Qc7 15 c4** The opening has been a disaster for Black, whose pieces lack reasonable squares.

Bd6 16 c5 Be7 17 Bf4 Qd7 **18 Rac1 Qc6 19 d5** exd5 20 **Bxd5 Qg6 21 h3** Stops Bg4. White has a dream position, where every piece is in action while Black's Q-side remains undeveloped.

Ra7 22 Qe3 Bf6 23 c6 bxc6 **24 Be4!** 24 Qxa 7 wins the exchange, but Kasparov wants a whole rook. Bf5 25 Bxf5 Qxf5 26 g4! Resigns.

No 2493



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by Pal Benko, 1993). Another miniature by American's problem-composing GM: you have to mate before Black's promoting pawn can do any damage.

No 2492: 1 Qd3 Rxd3+ 2 cxd3 mate. On other black defences White mates by 2 Na6, 2 Nb3, 2 Be7 or 2 Qb5. The finalists fell for 1 c4? d3!

Quick crossword no: 387

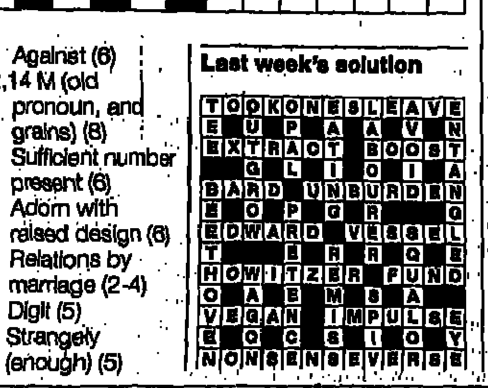
Across

1 "The man on the —— omnibus" (7)
8 Set in order (7)
9 Royal tomb (7)
10 (In) close partnership (with) (7)
11 Book of maps (5)
13 Void (feeling) (9)
15 Odd person (5,4)
18 Surpass (5)
21 Like the M25 (7)
22 Stuck on the bottom (7)
23 Loosen (with driver) (7)
24 Mini-clinic or treatment room (4,3)

Down

1 Dried coconut kernel (5)
2 Month (5)
3 Senior minister (4,9)
4 Crazy fellow (6)
5 Principal see (13)
6 Extra performance (6)
7 Against (6)
12,14 M (old pronoun, and grains) (8)
15 Sufficient number present (6)
16 Adorn with raised design (6)
17 Relations by marriage (2-4)
19 Digit (5)
20 Strangely (enough) (5)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

"*IS THERE* always a clue?" I asked. Sherlock Holmes put down his newspaper with a sigh. "I assume, Watson," he said, "that you are not referring to any of our little adventures that you chronicled with so lamentable a disregard for logical precision. Instead, you have been reading the bridge column in this week's Guardian Weekly, and are wondering . . ."

"Amazing, Holmes!" I interjected. "How could you possibly tell that I wanted to talk about the bridge column?"

"Your copy of the Guardian Weekly is open at the Leisure page," observed Holmes sarcastically, "and since you are incapable of holding more than one thought in your head for any length of time, it is surely obvious that the subject of your discourse would be that which had most recently occupied your mind."

"What is your opinion of this Mahmood, the author?" I inquired.

"The second least dangerous player in London," replied Holmes dismissively. "But in answer to your earlier question, it is indeed the case that very few situations at the bridge table furnish no clues at all to the inquiring mind.

"Take the following deal, which appeared in a recent international trial, and see if you can do better than the many declarers who failed in their contract:

♠ A 5
♥ Q 6 2
♦ K 8 3
♣ A J 9 6 2

♠ Q
♥ J
♦ A Q J 9 7 6 5 2
♣ K 10 4

"South is declarer in six diamonds, and since one can often obtain clues from the bidding — or lack of it — this was the auction at one table:

South	West	North	East
	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Double
6♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

"4NT was simple Blackwood, and in response to East's double of the conventional response, West led the ten of hearts. East won with the ace and returned a trump, West following. Your problem is the same as declarer's — who has the queen of clubs?"

"I can't see anything in the bidding to guide me," I said. "West did not open, and East did not overcall, but I don't really see how that helps. I would play out a few more rounds of trumps, in the hope that the discards . . ."

"My dear Watson," said Holmes, "I said that this was an international trial. The defenders, seeing that club suit on the table, are hardly likely to throw away other than unhelpful major suit cards. Of course, there may be a genuine squeeze of one kind or another, but there really is no need for such refinements. You have all the information at your disposal, if only you would use your powers of reason."

When I continued to look baffled, Holmes explained. "Consider East's decision to switch to a trump at the second trick. Whereas East may well suspect that a second round of hearts will not stand up, he would be more or less forced to play a heart at trick two as the only hope for the defence — unless he knew that dummy's club suit was not running! And how could he know that without the guarded queen in his own hand?"

Letter from Central Slovakia Edward Cullen

Doing the salamander

IT IS Friday afternoon and the start of a holiday weekend. Suddenly I understand what the bugle calls that have issued all week from the Tannoys in town must mean. Of course! The salamander is coming!

There is a legend here about a salamander. Years ago, a shepherd, sitting out with his flock through the heat of a scorching summer day, became aware of a salamander sitting in the shade beside him. Time passed, the sheep nibbled lazily at the grass and the sun moved higher. All at once, or so it seemed to the shepherd, the shadows slipped away and the salamander lay in the full gaze of the sun, and it glistened and sparkled like gold. Stunned, the shepherd crept closer and realised that the salamander was covered with gold dust. He reached out to touch the creature but it slipped away between the rocks. When the shepherd came down from the hills and told his story, the people realised for the first time that there were riches buried in their hills.

This, the story goes, was how the face of the countryside, and the fate of the people who lived in this mountainous region of Slovakia, were transformed. Gold and silver mining developed rapidly and brought prosperity for the next thousand years. Now the mines are closed, but every year the people remember and celebrate the salamander.

The celebration lasts for two days and draws people from the surrounding villages and even further afield. The main square is filled with a street market and spills over as people move from stall to stall, eating the food and drinking the alcohol for sale. Some stalls sell beer but most sell home-produced (and often cloudy) white wine. At one side of the cobbled square a stage is set up for folk singing and dancing, choirs and bands.

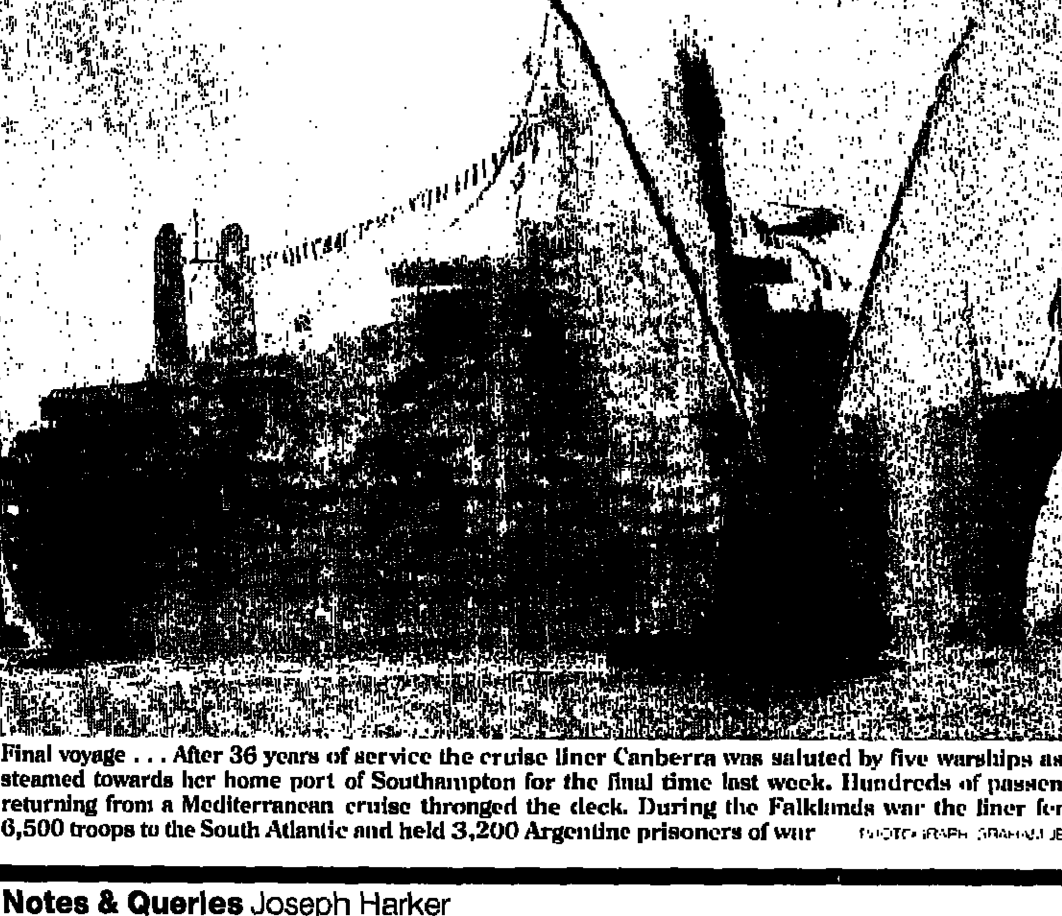
By early evening, the air is heavy with the scent of wine and there is plenty of evidence of serious drinking. More and more people arrive, streaming up the hill from the lower part of town to watch the salamander procession. This is timed to reach the square just as night falls and is the major event of the festival. For a kilometre in each direction, the main street leading up to the square is thick with spectators.

As the leading groups in the procession come into view, you begin to see how it works. The participants move forward and stop, move forward and then stop again. They travel in long curves, from side to side up the road, narrowing until they are walking in file, then opening out once again, all in imitation of the movements of the salamander.

This pattern only becomes apparent after watching for quite a while. The procession is so long and each constituent part so different. More than 30 different groups, each representing a village, mining community or lodge take part, and most groups have their own brass band or troupe of musicians. As each section of the salamander comes to a pause in the movement, they dance or sing or play. A whole village (or so it seems) of male voices sings echoing, resonant songs. They sing and sing until the tune is taken up by the crowd and hundreds of voices are raised in unison. It is stirring stuff. And then the procession moves on and scores of miners lanterns swing and splutter into the grainy dusk.

Dancing girls, decorated horses and carts, brass bands, folk singers and dancers all pass by as the salamander winds its way up the hill. Each time a group stops to perform, another moves on. Interspersed along the line, veteran miners and their families dressed in traditional costume march raggedly, holding up the banners of their villages. A cone-shaped copper cannon mounted on a gun-carriage is hauled all the way. At intervals it is pointed at the crowd, and young lads throw firecrackers into the barrel. These explode with piercing echoes.

There is cheering and applause, singing and laughter. And everywhere, everyone is drinking, spectators and participants alike — the last few groups in the procession glassy-eyed. Yet I never once see money changing hands. This is a moment for tradition and drunken glory alone.



Final voyage . . . After 36 years of service the cruise liner Canberra was saluted by five warships as she steamed towards her home port of Southampton for the final time last week. Hundreds of passengers returning from a Mediterranean cruise thronged the deck. During the Falklands war the liner ferried 6,500 troops to the South Atlantic and held 3,200 Argentine prisoners of war PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM JEFFERY

A Country Diary

Cothral Gogan

***KIAMBU, KENYA:* The old settler's home crowns the rising ranks of blossoming coffee. It is large and single storey and from a distance seems lost in a jungle of jacaranda trees in bloom. Their lilac blossoms carpet the bedraggled remains of a beautiful garden, struggling with weeds and indifference.**

Jacaranda are see-through and do not get in the way of the view from the house, over miles and miles of coffee, rising gently to the Mua Hills in the far distance. Kilima Mbogo, the hill of the Buffalo, stands up with its distinctive high, humped shape. The Aberdares command like a great castle to the northwest, and if you are lucky you may glimpse the beautiful but elusive Mount Kenya. Its equatorial snow never disappears.

Nearer to hand, at the entrance to the driveway, is a great bell-shaped indigenous tree, called the *muringa*. In bloom it becomes a mass of white, bubble-like blossoms.

It was under this tree that each evening, in days gone by, the displaced Kikuyu owner came to mourn his home, buried under swathes of coffee trees. Remarkably, his offspring express no regrets. More than the sweeping valley of greenery or the tangle of blossoms, they value the hard, brown beans. No one here speaks ill of the departed settler. Anyone can buy shares in the coffee he bequeathed, or draw water from his water-channel, or pray in the chapel he built.

As usual, both berry and blossom vie for attention. Women, exploited now as then, are already lining up to pick the reddening berry, while the white, scented blossom gives promise of another generous harvest.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF dinosaurs had developed complex civilisations, could any evidence of this possibly have survived 65 million years?

IT WOULD depend on whether the dinosaurs could have achieved our level of technology. The natural processes of the Earth's crust would have destroyed much evidence. Fossils survive millions of years, so perhaps artefacts made out of composite materials such as carbon fibre could survive, although buildings would have been buried.

The only sure way of leaving a trace of civilisation is to go into space. The artefacts left on the moon by the Apollo astronauts will still be there in millions of years time — if they have not been removed by future tourists. The Pioneer spacecraft, bearing messages to beings it may encounter, will still be voyaging through the stars for billions of years. — *Peter Stockill, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough*

HOW long will water keep in the fridge before it is unfit to drink?

IN 1984 I was on holiday in Norway. I put the water left over from my water bottle in a small jar at the back of the fridge. It was still there 13 years later, absolutely crystal clear and delightful to drink. And in Australia in 1990 I filled my bottle with rainwater. This is also crystal clear seven years later and it has not even been in the fridge. — *Roger Partridge, Surbiton, Surrey*

APART from Mother Teresa, who were the other four honorary citizens of the United States?

WINSTON CHURCHILL, the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg; and William and Hannah Penn, founders of Pennsylvania. — *Duke Morgan, London*

AM I more closely related to my mother or my brother?

THAT'S a good question for your father. — *Serghei Dascalu, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine*

IN TERMS of your genetic make-up, you inherit half your genes from your mother and half from your father. The information is carried on 46 sets of chromosomes — 23 pairs — which have been split and randomly recombined to make 23 new pairs in you. This means that you are "50 per cent" related to your mother.

Theoretically, you may share even more of your genes with your brother, due to your shared paternal input — in identical twins it is 100 per cent. However, probability suggests that shared genetic information in typical siblings can be relatively low. This is because it is possible, for example, that you inherit the opposite half of the chromosomal pairs from your mother to those inherited by your brother. On average, about one in four siblings could claim to be "more closely related" to each other than to their mothers. — *Mark Batchelor, Crawley, Sussex*

IF you embed a piece of copper in the trunk of a tree, does it kill the tree?

THIS may be true, especially if the piece of copper is the shape and size of a big axe. — *William Hamlin, Ontario, Canada*

NO. Minute amounts of copper might dissolve and pass into the sap flowing up through the trunk, but plants are quite tolerant of low concentrations — in fact copper is actually needed by plants, as a component of some proteins essential for photosynthesis. And high concentrations of copper salts have long been used as fungicides to spray on plants. At best the copper object may help to inhibit fungal attack near the wound, which would usually heal with time. Of course the copper could be a problem later if the tree is sawn for timber. — *Ken Joy, Warwickshire*

DURING my years as a tree surgeon I came across the copper-nail myth many times. Once, when cutting up the trunk of a typically vigorous poplar, I came across a ring of copper nails. Several inches inside the wood, the tree had enclosed them and carried on growing with no ill effects. — *Geoff March, Stroud, Gloucestershire*

WHAT are the chances of the year 2000 computer-date problem causing world-wide economic meltdown?

O1010101. — *Bert Hieleme, Tweed, Ontario, Canada*

Any answers?

I HAVE heard that one of the 12 tribes of Israel eventually settled in eastern Nigeria and became the present-day Ibo people. Is this true? — *Sebastian Uchenda, Vicenza, Italy*

WHICH is more intelligent, my seven-month-old baby or my seven-year-old cat? — *Mike McLinden, Harborne, Birmingham*

I HAVE just seen a spider build a web across my 4-metre garden without intervening support. How does it get the first thread started? — *H Tennyson, London*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Shocking images? Try the real thing

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY
Adrian Searle

JAMES ENSOR, of Ostend, was the oddest of artists. Born in 1860, the son of an English father and a Belgian mother, Ensor progressed from the reviled to the revered. Ensor the fool, Ensor the "Mule-ish Englishman", became Baron of Belgium, Knight of the Order of Leopold and annointed with the sobriquet Prince of Painters.

In his youth he espoused anarchist, socialist, anti-monarchist ideals. As a grand old man he dined with Albert Einstein, received reverential visits from Emile Nolde and Wassily Kandinsky, and was honoured by Belgian royalty. His drawings were bought by the Albertina in Vienna at the height of the second world war. A major retrospective of his work was held at the National Gallery in London in 1946, three years before he died.

The Barbican Art Gallery in London has mounted the first large-scale exhibition of Ensor's work in Britain since that National Gallery show.

Nowadays, Ensor is remembered in this country for his Entry Of Christ Into Brussels In 1899, a vast, burlesque carnival painting now in the Getty Museum. Christ, of course, is Ensor himself, envisioning himself being swept along by the crowd on his triumphal entry into the Belgian capital. Down in the bottom right-hand corner of the multitudinous, carnival scene, the Marquis de Sade looks benignly on.

Ensor's academic training was conventional enough, and the work from the early 1880s, which begins the Barbican exhibition — thickly-painted Brussels in buttery sunshine, claustrophobic bourgeois interiors — are all a bit off-putting. But he was, at the same time, painting luminous seascapes in the manner of Turner, making beautiful drawings and beginning to tip over into the mystical and into a world of demons and madness.





Horror scope: Ensor's Bad Doctors (left) seems irrelevant next to McCullin's victims of war (above)

At his best, Ensor is an alarming and frightening caricaturist, a weird mix of the 18th century satirist, the Sadean and the Blakean visionary. Sometimes, he is like Hieronymus Bosch redone as saucy seaside-postcard burlesque. As much as he looked inward for his inspiration, he looked to England: to the 19th century masters of English landscape, and to the savage, earthy wit of Gillray, Rowlandson and Hogarth. He painted and drew fierce scatologies, snivelling advocates and evil judges, top-hatted, syringe-toting doctors, garlanded with their expiring patients' entrails. He lampooned the Catholic Church, the judiciary, the military, the politicians, the bourgeoisie, the state.

In one of his most bitter etchings, Doctrinal Punishment, from 1889, a soldier, a nun, a bishop, a magistrate and King Leopold XI sit in a line, defecating into the open mouths of the populace below. Ensor later tried to suppress this coprophagic nightmare, buying up all the copies of the print he could find. With his amputated limbs, bloody knives, and idiot violences, Ensor looks forward to Philip Guston (and to the best of L S Lowry) as much as he looked back at Gillray.

But much of Ensor's best-loved work — his Pierrots, carnival masked clowns and demons — I find irritating and dull. Perhaps it isn't his fault: his inventions have become stock characters from the "strip away the skin of reality to reveal the festering sores beneath" school of heavy symbolic expressionism.

HOWEVER, Ensor's grim, cartoonish works — the Assassination, from 1890, the Good Judges — from the following year, and the Bad Doctors from the year after that, are the real stuff of nightmare. The rest strives too much, and his world comes to feel less and less real, too strained and artificial, and a little bit smug. Compared to Goya's Black Paintings, for example, Ensor's sweating, flabby, all-singing, all-dancing grotesquerie seems trite.

The Barbican has juxtaposed Ensor with a retrospective of the photographer Don McCullin. Whether or not these photographs are "art" (who cares? — his best work begs no equivocation) is of less import than the things he has seen and photographed. The exhibition traces McCullin's career as a photojournalist from his first published shot — of young hoodlums in Finsbury Park in 1959 — through war zones and famines, from sectarian violence in Cyprus and Derry, to penis-gourd waving tribesmen in Indonesia and lowering clouds over West Country fields.

Halfway through my second round of McCullin's show, I put my notebook away. What is the point, I thought, in redescribing what his eye has seen, his camera recorded. It is difficult to do more than enumerate. A mentally ill derelict yelling in Spitalfields. Happy transvestites in Southend. A Congolese civilian dead by a roadside, his face split open revealing his crushed skull. Starving Biafrans. A Sudanese boy, press-ganged into the army. Blank-eyed GIs. The dead and the butchered, the shell-shocked, the eviscerated, the bloated dead. Distraught mothers, victims, oppressors, more victims. Every one a victim, one way or another. Oh God, McCullin has seen too much. And we've seen it, too. The difference is he was there.

Some of the horror was closer to home, perhaps more prosaic, less overtly violent, more low-key.

Squalor and poverty is less cataclysmic than war; hunger less shocking than absolute famine. Napalm and machete attacks worse than rubber bullets, car bombs and bricks. But the atmosphere of McCullin's photographs is the same. The same darkness, the same starkness, the same brooding, dirty feel to things.

The cumulative effect of McCullin's exhibition is one of increasing distress. It is partly an inarticulate distress at one's own numbness in the face of the monstrous. We end up mouthing platitudes about man's inhumanity to man, but the problem is none of this is monstrous at all, or inhuman. It's all too human. We endure these images, and go on looking.

The upper gallery at the Barbican is a solemn place to be with these photographs. Looking over the parapet, down at the Ensors in the gallery below, I was struck by their comparative banality. Their colour felt like an affront.

Ensor — the stuff of nightmares? Did I write that? After McCullin's photographs they just seem to be part of an irrelevant cultural game. But in the end, such things are all we have to keep us from the edge.

There is respite. McCullin's photographs of elephants bathing in the river in India, a religious festival on a beach in Bali, his landscapes and still lifes, come at the end of the show as some kind of palliative. The landscapes turn grimness into atmospheric chiaroscuro. His still lifes — flowers and fruit and old bits of sculpture — are rendered in a pewter light. But as much as the camera takes them in, they seem the product of an eye brooding on massacres, corpses, mutilations and needless death.

Pop with snap and crackle

OBITUARY
Roy Lichtenstein

IT IS difficult to think of Roy Lichtenstein, who has died of pneumonia at the age of 73, as other than a man of the 1960s, one of the brightest stars of the American Pop Art movement which shot to fame and notoriety in New York in 1961-62.

By the end of the sixties exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic were already memorialising Pop Art as though to write finis under it all, with gratitude, but also a lot of art-historical nit-picking. Though almost all of the stars on what was by then a truly international firmament have gone on twinkling, the movement as such had reached something akin to middle age, which in this context means senility. In any case, there was a new movement to come to grips with, Conceptual Art: much less fun and rarely as brilliant visually.

Initially, there was none of the sudden, widespread enthusiasm for Pop Art in New York that we had in London. One of the big issues was whether doing paintings from advertising and from comic strips could possibly deserve the name of art.

Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol did not know each other when they both began to work with these sources. Lichtenstein had been exploring the use of Disney creatures in semi-abstract paintings and then also those much coarser images, small black-line newspaper advertisements for common goods such as sofas and golf balls.

In any case, this had all been part of a gradual development. Lichtenstein was born into a solid middle-class New York family. Painting was something of a hobby for teenaged Roy, but so was jazz, and he combined them in portraits of musicians. A summer school at the Art Students' League found him painting Bowery and Coney Island scenes under the tutelage of Reginald Marsh, himself a major New York social realist.

From this he went on to the School of Fine Arts at Ohio State University where he found himself fascinated by lectures on the psychology of vision and representation.

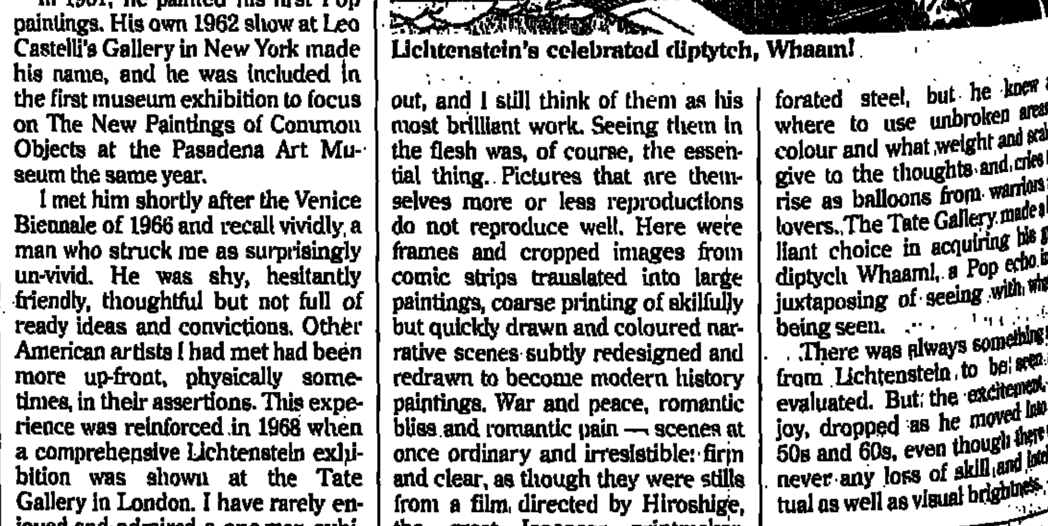
Stylistically he moved between semi-abstract work in various Cubist manners and his personal version of Abstract Expressionism. He worked for some years as an engineering draftsman and then also briefly as a graphic artist while having almost annual one-man shows in New York, marrying and becoming a father. In 1960 he was appointed professor of Rutgers University, where he met Alan Kaprow, the recent initiator of Happenings reflecting on consumer culture, and got involved with Kaprow's circle of collaborators, including Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine.

In 1961, he painted his first Pop paintings. His own 1962 show at Leo Castelli's Gallery in New York made his name, and he was included in the first museum exhibition to focus on The New Paintings of Common Objects at the Pasadena Art Museum the same year.

I met him shortly after the Venice Biennale of 1966 and recall vividly a man who struck me as surprisingly un-vivid. He was shy, hesitantly friendly, thoughtful but not full of ready ideas and convictions. Other American artists I had met had been more up-front, physically sometimes, in their assertions. This experience was reinforced in 1968 when a comprehensive Lichtenstein exhibition was shown at the Tate Gallery in London. I have rarely enjoyed and admired a one-man exhibition as much. It had all the intelligence and energy I had hoped to find in the man.

The comic-strip paintings stood out, and I still think of them as his most brilliant work. Seeing them in the flesh was, of course, the essential thing. Pictures that are themselves more or less reproductions do not reproduce well. Here were frames and cropped images from comic strips translated into large paintings, coarse printing of skilfully but quickly drawn and coloured narrative scenes subtly redesigned and redrawn to become modern history paintings. War and peace, romantic bliss and romantic pain — scenes at once ordinary and irresistible: firm and clear, as though they were stills from a film directed by Hiroshige, the great Japanese printmaker. Lichtenstein's technique was perfect for his purposes. He had found a way of imitating the dots of newsprint by painting through perforated steel, but he knew where to use unbroken areas of colour and what weight and scale to give to the thoughts and cries that rise as balloons from warriors and lovers. The Tate Gallery made a brilliant choice in acquiring his great diptych Whaam!, a Pop echo in its juxtaposing of seeing with what is being seen.

There was always something new from Lichtenstein to be seen and evaluated. But the excitement, the joy, dropped as he moved into the 50s and 60s, even though there was never any loss of skill and intellectual as well as visual brightness.



Lichtenstein's celebrated diptych, Whaam!

Norbert Lynton

Roy Lichtenstein, artist, born October 27, 1923; died September 29, 1997

Fish and VIPs

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

JENNIFER PATERSON and Clarissa Dickson Wright make the prospect of being overweight and over the hill positively enticing. You can, for instance, throw your weight about, and (judging by the sound of song and laughter) some sort of perpetual party seems to be going on on the other side of the hill.

It is the sign of a dedicated party-goer when the doorman at the Dorchester ("A very good watering hole") greets you like an old friend. By the simple act of breathing Paterson seems to exhibit the *joie de vivre* which comes to most of us only after several large pink gins.

I first encountered her on Food And Drink when she roared up on a motorbike, festooned in random scarves like Isadora Duncan (or, perhaps, not very like). It was pumpkin harvest time. Pumpkins were piled up into a pumpkin mountain brighter than a thousand suns. Their colours were autumnal, their waistlines laughable, they all seemed to have taken a deep breath and gone red in the face. She dominated this exuberance effortlessly, like a dangerously unpredictable fairy godmother. You felt she might at any minute turn the whole boiling lot into a convoy of London buses.

The fickle finger of fame has tapped Jennifer and Clarissa on the shoulder when they least expected it. Television celebrity doesn't suit everyone. Dandy Nichols, a bit of a violet at heart, was quite wounded when people used to shout "Silly mool" after her in the street. You would be looking at Jennifer Paterson for some time before you were reminded of any bit of a violet.

They are now on their second series of Two Fat Ladies (BBC2).

I would say that Clarissa was the straight man but, as she is so clearly neither, "feed" might be more appropriate. Jennifer was describing how to soak salt cod. "It is very handy if you happen to have a running stream coming through the kitchen like they do in the monasteries in Portugal." "What," asked Clarissa, "if you don't have a running stream?" "You leave a tap dripping, which the Water Board won't like, but to hell with them." It was quite a while before you wondered what Jennifer was doing in a Portuguese monastery.

The flimsy excuse for their double act was the Brazilian ambassador's cocktail party. The ambassador's parties, of course, are known for their exquisite taste. This time, as Jennifer and Clarissa were doing the cooking, he got cod balls.

On arrival, Jennifer tried out her creaking Portuguese. "I think I said we were the two fat ladies for the ambassadress. I might have said we're the two fat tarts for the ambassador." The ambassador's wife escorted them, with undue haste I thought, to the bowels of the embassy.

They discussed how to pin down a man at a cocktail party. Jennifer said: "I've noticed these lovely girls pitch their voice very low like this. The man has to get nearer and nearer. It always works. I say 'HELLO, DEARS!' and I don't get off with anybody." After a while pans stopped rattling and no more crockery fell off the shelves.

Clarissa said: "I go off and look interestingly at some picture or piece of furniture. Invariably somebody will come up and talk to you. And you say [she adopted the look of a dying duck in a thunderstorm]: 'I don't think Louis Quinze dates, really. It's beyond fashion.' Then they get very bored and go away." She threw a spent match over her shoulder in a manner which reminded you strongly of Henry VIII.

At the ambassador's cocktail party, slim women with sparkling ears nibbled fishy bits. Jennifer and Clarissa were on the balcony like love locked out. Undeflated, Jennifer sang a spirited rendition of Brazil. They are, as Jennifer said about devils on horseback, "a substantial and rich but very tasty titbit".

Working up a lava

CINEMA
Richard Williams

THE handful of really good films about post-war Los Angeles, from In A Lonely Place through Chinatown to Internal Affairs, use an underlying awareness of the city's geological instability as a metaphor for a general moral uncertainty. From Malibu's slide area to the San Andreas Fault, the ground is always moving under the characters' feet. No such subtextual richness bothers the makers of Volcano, a disaster movie that settles for a one-dimensional view of the most significant city of our time.

But movies like this cannot exist without a new angle on urban catastrophe. And when the tectonic plates start shifting beneath MacArthur Park, something unexpected happens. Instead of toppling tall buildings, the disturbance encourages a river of molten lava to pour through the fissure. It finds an outlet in the newly excavated subway, generating heat that fries unfortunate tunnel workers to a crisp and creating enough pressure to send manhole covers pinging skywards like champagne corks.

Into the breach leaps Mike Roark of the Office of Emergency Management, wielding not much more than Tommy Lee Jones's best cynical smile as two female geologists deliver a crash-course in basic seismology. "Lava?" he responds with a genial sneer. "Here in LA?"

Mick Jackson, the TV-trained British director, experienced a Hollywood disaster of his own earlier in the decade with LA Story, a catastrophically self-satisfied comedy starring Steve Martin. His commercial credibility was re-established with The Bodyguard, but the devastation visited on some of the city's prime real estate and most famous landmarks during the course of Volcano may be seen as $70 million worth of revenge for the failure of his first attempt at local colour.

Most of the budget goes into various forms of destruction. Office blocks and art galleries explode, fireballs streak across the sky, palm trees collapse in showers of sparks, the La Brea tar pits boil over, mannequins in a bridal shop window meet a fiery death, and an all-terrain vehicle melts helplessly in the devouring tide.

"All hell is breaking loose," someone shouts as the screen shudders with the percussive roar of the earthquake and the orange river flows. But the moral lessons go largely unexplored, except when the lava passes the front door of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where a banner advertises an exhibition devoted to a great Dutch painter. "This Hieronymus Bosch, he's heavy," a fireman remarks as he staggers away from the building, carrying a painting in its gilt frame. "That", a colleague gasps as they try to outrace the lava, "is because he deals with man's inclination to sin in defiance of God's will."

Otherwise Jerome Armstrong's script relies on topical references and local gags to provide relief from the relentless schematics. "Oh, great — Mark Fuhrman," says a black man arrested by a shaven-headed white cop. "The lights are out in San Francisco," someone says in the emergency control centre, earning the instant rebuke: "Who gives a shit about San Francisco?" When white volcanic ash starts to drift down, a policeman observes that cars are stalling on the freeway because their air filters are clogging. "Chevettes, right?" another cop mutters.

Jones, as the only name actor, has to carry an enormous weight. But the fact that the role makes no demands on his talent, beyond the burden of trying to make various absurd stunts look remotely believable, doesn't seem to bother him, which leads even an admirer to suspect that he might be in danger of taking dispassionate professionalism — of the sort espoused by the late Robert Mitchum — too far. One difference is that when Mitchum could find no depth in a part, he let us see a bit of himself instead. Jones seems to lack that inner resource. And, like Harrison Ford, he is too ready a victim of Hollywood's distaste for substance.

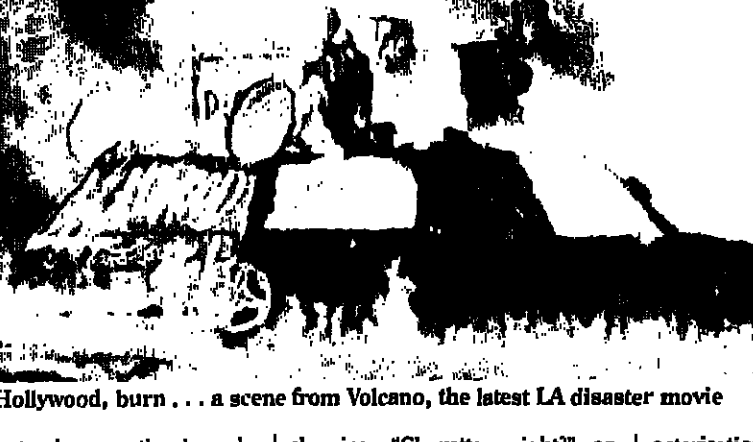
But it has to be admitted that, in terms of a Saturday night at the movies, little can hold back the unstoppable momentum of modern Hollywood values.

GOODNESS knows what Hong Kong's new rulers are making of Jackie Chan's First Strike, the latest instalment of the stuntman-superstar's Police Story series, laid out by the director, Stanley Tong, on a template formed from handy bits of old James Bond movies.

Chan, who looks like the missing Osmond brother, but moves like Bruce Lee, has a charm that overrides chaotic plotting, minimal characterisation and slipshod dubbing, to such an extent that people normally averse to anything involving spies or martial arts may find themselves giggling at the ingenious antics of a hero who refuses to take himself seriously. First Strike rattles along at a decent lick, incorporating a couple of miraculous action sequences that justify what appears to be a sublime indifference to its own technical shortcomings.

Chan's mission, fashionably enough, is to retrieve a stolen nuclear warhead hidden somewhere in the Ukraine, before moving off to a mountain setting which provides an immediate excuse for chase sequences involving skis and Snowmobiles. Operating on behalf of the CIA and the Russian FSB ("the new, improved KGB"), he follows the warhead to Australia, where he confronts two favourite species of Bond opponents, sharks and giant ginger-haired Russian killers, and indulges in the hallowed pastime of landing a sports car on the deck of a pleasure boat. Any doubts about his pretensions are removed when he drops his trousers to reveal a pair of koala-bear underpants.

All his qualities of wit and agility are brought together in a brilliantly choreographed warehouse fight. Whirling a builder's ladder around his head, he displays a balletic speed and deftness, and a broad, self-mocking humour that leaves his audience winded with laughter.



Burn, Hollywood, burn . . . a scene from Volcano, the latest LA disaster movie

Passion amid scholarship

THEATRE
Michael Billington

WHY A E Housman? Why should Tom Stoppard have chosen him as the subject of his new play, The Invention Of Love, running at London's Cottesloe Theatre? Because it gives Stoppard the chance to meditate on scholarship and poetry, goodness and beauty, homo and hetero, Ruskin and Pater, Housman and Wilde, and a whole host of other subjects beside. Whatever the play may lack, it is certainly not raw material.

In fact, the play is one of Stoppard's juiciest. Like Travesties it deals with the nature of memory, as the dead Housman looks back on his younger self, and with the coincidences of history. Like Arcadia, it is also preoccupied with the quality of passion, the random nature of literary survival and the idea of life as a route march leading inexorably to the grave. It is weighed down with too much scholarship, but it attempts to combine the pyrotechnic dazzle of early Stoppard with the later mellowness.

For my taste, it is crammed with too much detail. He not only recaptures the young Housman's passion for his Oxford contemporary, Moses Jackson, but also the quips and quiddities of dons of the time. But the play really takes wing when the dead AEH confronts the young Housman.

Stoppard always writes best when he writes from the heart; and here he gives the older man a deeply moving defence of classical scholarship. But also, Stoppard dwells on the lottery of literary survival and on the power of passion.

For the other big theme that runs through the play is that feeling is defined by intensity rather than vociferousness. Housman's passion for Jackson was internalised, unconsummated and the oblique source of much of the poetry. But Stoppard's point is that it was just as real as Wilde's more flamboyant infatuation with Bosie. In that sense, the play is an unfashionable anti-Freudian work that hymns the validity of sexual repression and of a closeted love.

What is intriguing is that it offers Stoppard at his best and worst. The Latin learning is laid on with a trowel. At the same time, the jokes are very good and Stoppard writes with palpable love about a poet fired by the idea of textual integrity who knew the value of Platonic love.

Richard Eyre, in his last production as the National's director, serves the text with his usual exemplary loyalty. I also liked Anthony Ward's back-projections. And at the heart of the play lies the formidable pairing of John Wood and Paul Rhys as the dead and the living Housman. John Carlisle, Benjamin Whitrow and Michael Bryant lend weight to a supporting cast in an evening that reminds us that Stoppard, for all his cerebral qualities, is at his best when he endorses private passion.

Two thumbs good . . .

. . . four thumbs a masterpiece? **Stuart Jeffries** on how postmodernism has led to the death of serious criticism

ILLUSTRATION: GEOFF GRANDFIELD

WE DON'T need critics. Or at least not very much. Today there is no time for, or point in, reading lengthy appraisals of a work of art. What we need instead is a really good graphic of a thumb. The designers could come up with something very attractive. The critic's role would be reduced to coming back from the show, holding up a thumb or pointing it downwards. This would be converted into graphic form and appear on the arts page next to the title of the film, play or recital. What we don't need any more is the subspecies of journalist that goes out of the office to see something and tries to explain why it gives pleasure or pain.

With certain critics, and certain newspapers, this philistine revolution has already taken place: the American film critics Siskel and Ebert, for example, have only one mode of approval, which litters the advertisements in the New York Times each Sunday. "Two thumbs up!" is their praise: it represents not criticism as we have known it, but grunting, which we hoped we had evolved beyond.

Once we had William Hazlitt and Joseph Addison; soon we will have journalists who go to plays and write about how they met the lead backstage. The reasons critics give for liking or loathing works of art are increasingly seen as irrelevant. Worse, the range of reactions they offer when they evaluate some work of art or cultural product have shrunken to two poles: good or bad. Criticism is offered less and less scope for what was seen, at least in Britain, as its fundamental purpose — eloquent discrimination.

The American philosopher Nelson Goodman once wrote a paper about the overvaluation of value. He believed that the incessant ranking of works of art was inimical to understanding the things that are being ranked, as the critic becomes chiefly a person who says *yes* or *no*, rather than one who helps us to understand *why*.

Two things seem to have happened. First, the reader's attention span has shrunk, whatever the subject; or, if not that, it has shrunk where criticism is concerned; or, if not that, newspapers and magazines presume it has. Hence the proliferation of graphic-led, at-a-glance guides to what's on.

Second, and more important, there is a trend to reduce the work of art to a commodity, to make aesthetic appreciation just another form of shopping. No wonder, then, that in some papers, restaurants are assessed next to ballet performances; that a review of Hiroshige can appear near to a neurotic assessment of budget sunglasses. The presumption behind the juxtaposition is that what readers really want to know is whether something is worth paying to see, hear, digest or own. Aesthetics is just a minor branch of economics, great art just another spending opportunity.

Some aesthetic products lend themselves more readily to this form of commodification. CDs, be they The Prodigy's latest or Schumann *lieder*, are at one level consumer durables as much as cars, and can increasingly be evaluated in similar ways. A performance by the Kirov Ballet, by contrast, is a fleeting, singular thing that, tradition suggests, can only be caught in the butterfly net of the critic's thought. It is not, nor never will be, confused with a fridge.

It is not just whether a performance is live or recorded that determines whether a critical evaluation can be reduced to a graphic thumb. Popular art forms, such as film or pop gigs, surrender themselves more readily to this attenuated assessment; more slowly does the shadow of the thumb creep over theatre or painting. Perhaps because books were among the first aesthetic products to be critically evaluated, lit-crit has acquired both a history and a snobbery. So books resist being reduced to commodities, even though they are consumer durables as much as fridges or CDs, and appear in reviews with their prices attached.

Newspaper criticism is not a monolithic entity: television drama is not reviewed in the same way as live drama, for instance; nor is it reviewed at the same time. TV reviews appear the morning after the broadcast; the latest art show at the Tate is generally reviewed before it opens. (Of all forms of newspaper criticism, TV reviewing is the most bizarre: television is a medium rather than an art form, and yet the way in which it is consumed can serve to flatten the differences between the different kinds of programme — drama, documentary, news, etc — that one is watching.)

What is in the process of dying — or at least being marginalised into irrelevance — is the notion that the critic should affect the way you experience a work of art. Thus, the British philosopher Malcolm Budd, in his book Values Of Art: writes: "Criticism, in its attempt to establish a work's artistic value, will draw attention to the aesthetic and also the non-aesthetic characteristics upon which its value depends. Since convincing criticism changes or refines your interpretation of a work, and what you are aware of in it, and since these are integral to the way you experience the work, a change of interpretation effects a change in experience." Budd is no doubt right. If convincing criticism involves, at best, helping the reader to a more rich experience, then the growing current for reductive, philistine criticism involves merely suggesting that a work is, or is not, worth experiencing. This may be understandable in an age of information overload and artistic over-production, but it cannot be the only question the critic should address.

Aesthetics is just a minor branch of economics, great art just another spending opportunity

But why should we worry about this deformation of newspaper criticism? As Gilbert Adair notes in the introduction to his new collection of essays, Surfing The Zeitgeist, workaday reviewers have never loomed very prominently in the history of either art or ideas. "Yet they are, after all, the guardians of the living culture; it is to them, at the very least, that the task of keeping that culture greased has historically been assigned . . . The health and hence the future of our culture rests in the hands of hacks . . ." If this is true, it cannot be enough for the hacks to be merely hysterical hyperbolists, championing rubbish and becoming the obliging publicists of works of art they truly despise. Criticism is at its worst when it is riven by bad faith. To his credit, this trend appals Adair.

But Adair is equally concerned about the undervaluation of value. He cites a review by the noted film critic, Anthony Lane, in the New Yorker. Assessing the merits of the Pamela Anderson film Barb Wire, Lane wrote: "The true sadness of this picture is that it remains unutterably funless," adding, culpably: "I don't mind that it's rubbish." Adair sees in this last sentence the terminal disarray, the defection of intellectual duty, endemic to contemporary criticism. And he has a point: But while there are problems with criticism, Adair misdiagnoses them.

Lane's remark is not simple-minded but, rather, witting cynicism. It is an example of the late, stale fruit of postmodernism: value, in the postmodernist project, was to be abolished, or at least shoved into the critical unconscious, partly as a reaction to the perceived conservatism of distinctions between high and low culture. Postmodernism thus became celebrated as liberating, democraticising. At least, that was the theory.

But one result of postmodernism is a refusal to engage with the work *critically* (except, chiefly, as a source of jokes). In its stead comes a pose of affectlessness, that nothing could move this critic to revulsion or adoration. It's the cynicism that governs much journalism, and thus is as hierarchical as the style of criticism that preceded it: one has to be in a privileged position, cut off from the rest of society, to waste one's life watching rubbish and not care that one is doing so.

Lane also represents another worrying trend: that talk about art (or at least Pamela Anderson films) is more interesting, and more profound, than the subject of that talk. In an earlier collection, The Postmodernist Always Rings Twice, Adair distinguished between art and culture — the former was the thing itself, the latter the much more appealing business of chatting about it. In traditional aesthetics, there is what is known as the acquaintance principle, which amounts to the seemingly minimal requirement that one should have experienced a work of art before one is competent to judge its merits. What Adair seemed to have detected is not low-grade criticism but chat about cultural products that often is based on second-hand opinion.

While Barb Wire is undoubtedly "unutterably funless", chat about it can be fun, even rewarding, not least because it is the province of self-regarding, self-reflexive chatterers — a mafia of cultural writers who write for themselves. Either way, though, this culture abjures that old thing, criticism.

Perhaps there was some justification for a postmodern attack on the conservative canons of art and the élitism of much criticism. Terry Eagleton, in The Function Of Criticism, wrote of the birth of modern criticism in England that led to, among other journals, Addison's Spectator magazine: "The ferocious contentions of essayists and pamphleteers took place within the gradual crystallisation of an increasingly self-confident ruling bloc in English society, which defined the limits of the effectively sayable." Outside the sayable were the rest of us, effectively silenced by the hierarchy of value. This, surely, extends to how pop music and film have been received: popular culture, for want of a better term, was laughed into silence, vast tracts of aesthetic experience pronounced unworthy of attention.

But if postmodernism can be seen as an egalitarian project, it can also, in terms of how it has been manipulated, be regarded as the home of valuelessness, affectlessness and cynicism. The Addisonian élite has been replaced by an even less worthy ruling bloc of self-regarding writers who, swollen with pride and freebies, do not deign to do the honest work of critical evaluation.

One of the results of this corruption was a conference at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1990, in which a clutch of anxious postmodernists attempted to rediscover value. Some speakers saw in the loss of value a response to the ugliness of our times; others, a loss of hope or (which is the same thing) critical sense — another voice of privilege, another tyranny. What has become all but unsayable now is that a work of art is moving: the prevailing mood is either affectless or hyperbolic. In the latter case, only exceptionally is praise not ironic.

But none of these responses is good enough. Art isn't like fridges. It should give us higher pleasures, including those that enable us to improve the way we live our lives, give them a spiritual dimension. This may sound like an ancient, simple hope, but surely it is time to restate it and so argue against criticism's collapse into something that deserves the thumbs-down before it is finally run through.

Authentic revolutionary with a true aim

Guy Evans

Companero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara
by Jorge Castañeda
Bloomsbury 444pp £20

IN CARACAS at the end of his motorcycle journey around the Americas, the young Che Guevara met an old freedom fighter. "You," the old man warned, "will die with your fist clenched and your jaw tense, the perfect manifestation of hatred and struggle."

And so it turned out. Fifteen years later, the young man who wrote "I see myself being sacrificed to the authentic revolution" would be executed in a small, squalid classroom in La Higuera, Bolivia. As photographs were taken to prove that the commandante was dead, a handkerchief was wrapped around his jaw to cover up the disfigurement of death. Later, his hands were cut off. By that time, in 1968, Guevara was a legend, and his iconic status makes it a tricky job for any biographer to disentangle the man from the myth.

Ernesto Guevara de la Serna was born into an Argentine blue-blood family on June 14, 1928. He was a sickly child and, aged two, suffered his first asthma attack, a complaint that was to plague him his whole life, and was perhaps, as Castañeda outlines, a powerful influence on his character. To compensate, the young Guevara developed extraordinary strength of will. In a letter to his parents years later, he would write: "A willpower that I have polished with an artist's care will carry my weak legs and tired lungs."

Even more intriguing is the suggestion that Guevara may have been literally an adrenalin junkie. Adrenalin prevents asthma attacks, an explanation perhaps of why the guerrilla leader would be less ill in the heat of a campaign. He only survived the messy Bolivian expedition through regular injections of Novocaine. All this, thinks Castañeda, added to Guevara's hatred of wavering and inaction, which is associated with sickness. The solution? "To flee contradiction."

The final piece of the puzzle in the making of a revolutionary fell into place in his early 20s. As a boy, Guevara had a map of Spain on his bedroom wall to follow the battles of the Spanish Civil War. After qualifying as a doctor in Buenos Aires, he left on the motorcycle trip that would lead to permanent exile. Along the way, he tended Peruvian lepers and talked politics with Venezuelan miners. By the end of the trip, his politicisation, albeit on an emotional level, was complete. It was a modern utopianism: guerrilla struggle would create a new man with moral not economic incentives, and bring about international socialism through solidarity with the Soviet Union. His ideology would remain this simple, many say simplistic, to the end.

All that remained was to pick the battle. After imprisonment in Mexico for his role in an insurrection against Batista (Guevara was the only prisoner to attempt converting his jailers to Marxism), he alighted on Cuba — "It is worth dying on a beach for such a noble idea." From here, the story is familiar: the triumphant entry into Havana in January 1959, his extraordinary contribution to the final invasion — a 300km trip through bad roads, enduring thirst, hunger and enemy fire. The cult of Che was born.

The very characteristics that made Guevara such a fine revolutionary were not such a bonus in administration. He soon began to condemn the Soviets and criticise Castro. The naivety that had led him to embrace the Soviet Union was now distancing him from it. By 1964, he had been marginalised. It was no surprise, then, that he returned to guerrilla missions, first in the Congo and then on to the inevitable disaster in Bolivia. All this is told with great authority by Castañeda, a Latin American political scientist with a gift for compressing heavy geopolitics and theory into absorbable prose.

While exceptional in its sketch of Guevara the revolutionary, the book is far weaker on Guevara the man. His widow, Aleida, whom Castañeda calls "legendarily possessive", refused to co-operate, so there are no quotes from personal records or writings. Admittedly, Guevara was a man in whom "the sense of the big picture as opposed to the personal" was strong, but none-the-less it is a serious omission and makes the book's second half a dry read.

By 1968, Guevara was seriously ill, disillusioned and close to defeat. In October, he was captured and executed. Within months, his image, famously captured by Korda — eyes fixed on a distant horizon, hair blowing, head erect — was seen at Columbia sit-ins and held aloft in Prague to exorcise the tanks from the streets. Guevara was the last gasp of the revolutionary ideal as an act of sheer will — the perfect icon for a generation whose slogan was "We want the world and we want it now". Casteñeda's verdict is that Guevara "was destined, like so few others in this time, to die the death he wished and live the life he dreamt" — in which lies both his tragedy and enduring appeal.



Great game . . . Che Guevara, putting, and Fidel Castro playing golf in 1961. This picture comes from a large exhibition of Che photographs at the London Institute Gallery (until October 31) PHOTO: ALBERTO KORDA

Celebrities challenged

Lawrence Donegan

Best Seat In the House
by Spike Lee, with Ralph Wiley
Fourth Estate 327pp £9.99

THE celebrity sporting memoir is a rarity in publishing — a small mercy for which we can all be grateful. Would the world really be a happier place if Jimmy Tarbuck's My Lifetime On The Links ever saw the light of day? Or David Mellor's gritty insight into modern-day football, The View From The Comfort Of The Directors' Box? The same question might be asked about Best Seat In The House, a ghost-written autobiography by Spike Lee in which the film director charts his life, from childhood to the making of Malcolm X, through his devotion to basketball and, specifically, to his hometown team, the New York Knicks.

The answer in Lee's case, sadly, is no. I say sadly because there is a good book to be written about the importance of basketball to black American culture, in particular the disgraceful fact that even in 1997 the game represents just about the only hope of escape from the misery of the ghetto for many young black Americans. Unfortunately for Lee and his publishers such a book was written in 1976 by Rick Telander, whose evocative, beautifully written Heaven Is A Playground charted a year in the lives of aspirant players on basketball courts around New York City.

The trick was repeated in Hoop Dreams, the magnificent 1995 documentary which followed two high school students as they tried to break into the professional game. There were claims of Hollywood racism when the film failed to be nominated for an Oscar, and rightly so. It is difficult to imagine a similar outcry when Lee's book fails to win the Pulitzer Prize for sports-writing.

Best Seat In The House fails for many reasons, but mostly precisely because it is written from the best seat in the house, the $1,000-a-pop courtside seats at Madison Square Garden from where Lee and his fellow celebrities — Woody Allen and John McEnroe to name but two — watch the Knicks. Lee makes strenuous (and, frankly, embarrassing) efforts to connect with the "ordinary" fan but can't escape the fact that he is a rich man writing about his well-upholstered hobby.

It is an immutable rule of sports-writing that the best books are written from, or about, the underbelly, where the pulse of the game and its participants can best be taken. Even so there ought to have been some insights to be had from the $1,000 seats. Lee's celebrity gives him access to the game's biggest stars, including Michael Jordan (with whom the director made a series of ads for Nike), but if he has learned anything about what motivates them or what they think about the world beyond basketball then he's keeping it to himself.

Jordan makes several appearances in the book, including an "in-depth" interview with Lee which could have been written by the lowliest sports reporter. More successful is Lee's encounter with Woody Allen, where his fellow director recalls a basketball scene he cut from Annie Hall in which the Knicks side were pitted against a team of intellectuals ("Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, myself . . . people who couldn't do anything until they had thought it to death. Everything had to be debated").

Allen is a Knicks fan of even longer standing than Lee, but his cameo provides only temporary respite from dreary basketball statistics and the worries of millionaire sports fans. "I'm paying six hundred bucks for four seats," says Allen at one point. "I paying two grand for two," says a sympathetic Lee. "Right but you're sitting right there." "But still, you've got great seats also." It would make you weep, wouldn't it? Not with them, but at them.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

The Inferno of Dante, trs Robert Pinsky (Dent, £12.99)

IT IS nice to see that people are still making an effort at translating the immortal Dante; and that the efforts seem to be getting better. Pinsky's is very good indeed, and the confidence that allows this to be a parallel text is not misplaced. I'm not sure that this is the best translation I've seen — that honour goes, in my book, to Allen Mandelbaum, who did the entire Commedia for Everyman; but then Mandelbaum doesn't quite manage to reproduce the rhyme scheme as faithfully as Pinsky. It's swings and roundabouts, really. Get both. Or learn Renaissance Tuscan. It's not that hard, honest.

Selected Letters, by Gustave Flaubert, trs and int Geoffrey Wall (Penguin, £9.99)

SINCE somebody at Faber decided, some years ago, to let their two-volume edition of Francis Steegmuller's translation go out of print, this less comprehensive selection will have to do. It's not bad, though, and if some of the phrases are more slangy than Steegmuller's Harvard-endorsed versions, Wall's at least read fluently. It's terrific stuff. At the age of 30, he wrote, "I am about to join the ranks of the men that whores wince at, when it comes to shagging." He also wrote much more salubrious letters to his mum. I wonder if he ever got the envelopes mixed up.

The Ultimate Insult, compiled by Maria Leach (Michael O'Mara, £5.99)

A RATHER cheaply and defiantly unscholarly collection of slag-offs including real corkers. H L Mencken: "Perhaps the most revolting character that the United States ever produced was the Christian businessman." Anon: "When Jimmy Carter gave a fireside chat, the fire went out." Norm Van Brocklin: "If I ever needed a brain transplant, I'd choose a sportswriter because I'd want a brain that had never been used."

Edward de Bono's Textbook of Wisdom (Penguin, £7.99)

THIS book contains some of the most mindless rubbish I've ever been privileged to hear from an adult. (If they'd called it "De Bono's Textbook of Risible Platitudes", that would have been fine.) I won't quote any because cleaning vomit from computer keyboards is nasty, time-consuming work. Just trust me when I say that you will become wiser if you gently smear your nose against any section of this newspaper — adverts included. No correspondence, please.

The Exorcist, by Mark Kermode (BFI Modern Classics, £7.99)

THE continued ban on video release of the film means that we should still be scared by it. We might find it laughable these days. But personally, I doubt it — even looking at the stills in this book gives me the willies. It's nice to have the mythology behind the film explained: how they managed the levitations, the revolving head, the subliminal frames. Funny to think that the possessed child's mother was based on Shirley MacLaine.

Fast forward who savours success

Jim White meets Les Ferdinand, a striker who is bankable and thankful

IF YOU wanted a measure of the pre-eminent position football and footballers now enjoy in Britain, it was there the moment Les Ferdinand walked into the West Lodge Hotel in Hadley End on Thursday last week. To be found just where London finally peters out into the green belt of Hertfordshire, this is a gaff where they are so used to accommodating the wealthy there is a wind sock on for guests who bring their own helicopters.

Pop singers and movie stars regularly motor up its meandering drive, watched by a security camera on every other tree. The car park looks like a Mercedes Benz convention. Yet when Les climbed from his Range Rover and ambled easily across the lobby, glowing from a morning's training, the whole place descended into an involuntary twitch and flutter. And that was just the men.

"Can you make this for Craig," asked the waitress at the head of the queue which immediately lined up at his table the moment Les sat down for an apple juice. "Sorry to disturb you, I don't normally ask guests, but my son'ld never forgive me if he knew you'd been in and I'd not asked." "Arsenal fan is he?" joked Les, the Spurs hero, as he signed away. The woman, distracted utterly by his gigawatt grin, didn't reply: she was speechless in his presence.

The reaction he generates is not simply because Les is laughably good-looking. It is not just that he is known to be stepping out with the curvaceous television presenter, Dani Behr. It is that Les Ferdinand is a successful professional footballer, and thus a very rich one.

This week he is in Rome, helping England qualify for the World Cup finals, or so the nation fervently hopes. And those lining up at his table, or nodding over in acknowledgment, or just staring at him, share one fundamental belief: these days there can be nothing better to be than someone like Les. Pop singers and movie stars may be equally lusted over, but what Les was generating here was something else. Admiration. Respect. This lad had made it.

And he rather likes the reaction he causes. "Listen, when I started in the game, I wanted to be recognised," he says, after the staff have finally twittered back to work. "I saw older players getting asked for their autographs and I thought, yeah, I want some of that, man.

"See, people only recognise me because I've done well at my job and that gives me satisfaction, no denying it. But the other thing about fame is this: I get into places now because I'm Les Ferdinand. If I was just an ordinary black geezer from Ladbroke Grove I wouldn't get in. That makes me realise what a very lucky ordinary black geezer I am."

Ferdinand spends much of his time astonished by his good fortune. He can't quite believe that he, the lad from a struggling working-class family in West London, has it all, and has it so soon.

"You set yourself dreams," he says. "Play for England, play for Spurs, own a Porsche. I've done them all. I know it's a horrible cliché, but I'll say it anyway: it's a dream come true." Apart from the fast cars and the big house and the wardrobe the size of a respectable semi, Ferdinand has now acquired the other essential possession of a soccer star, his autobiography. It's not a great read, as footballing memoirs seldom are. But amid the standard accounts of lads and goals there are hints of the struggle he has made to reach the top.

In football terms he is a late comer. While most of his fellow professionals were spotted and groomed by clubs from as young as eight years old, he was 20, and a father, before he earned a living out of the game. Like Ian Wright, the Arsenal and England striker, he had to make his name as an amateur before he was noticed by the big boys.

"I've heard Wrighty say this and I definitely agree with him," he says. "When you've done an ordinary job, like me steam-cleaning taxis and selling wallpaper, when you've worked nine hours before you can go and play your football . . . then suddenly you're being paid to kick a ball. Man, do you appreciate that." He also believes that it is no coincidence that both he and Wright had to make their way up through the amateur game before coming to the notice of the big clubs.

"It's not the case so much now, but when I was a kid there was definitely a reluctance to look at black kids. Those words I hate and despise: 'They've got a chip on their shoulder.' You'd hear that all the time. No one tried to understand or work with us; the moment there was a hint of anything, we got dismissed as having an attitude problem."

'Any footballer who thinks there's any sentiment in this game should think again'

Too many of his contemporaries missed the opportunity to better themselves through football, he says, because no one cared to give them a chance. "Hey, round our way, it was easy to get into trouble but I think in life you've got choices. Fortunately, I chose not to be led astray. That was my mum mainly. She instilled me with proper values. That, and I was scared she'd beat the crap out of me if I did wrong."

Ferdinand's first professional club was Queen's Park Rangers, who bought him from non-league Hayes. The irony was that they need not have paid a penny, if only they had bothered to look. He was born and brought up within the shadow of Queen's Park Rangers' Loftus Road stadium, where his parents settled after arriving from St Lucia in the early sixties. He played all his junior football within a couple of miles of its centre circle, yet no one from his estate was ever watched by scouts from the club.

"At the school I went to there was umpteen excellent black players," he says. "But when I got to QPR, it was full of Irish and Scots lads. No one from London. Once the chairman said to me: 'You're from round here, why does no one from the White City estate support us?' I said: 'Because you don't support them.' "



Ferdinand: 'I don't want to lose this. I love it'

Once he got his opportunity, Ferdinand says he was not about to let it go. Not least because he wouldn't have been able to face his mother if he had. "I don't want to lose this. I love it so much, I'm going to do everything I can to play as long as I can," he says.

"But then the stakes are so high now in football, you can't afford to let anything slip anyway. If you're cynical about it, you realise there is so much to be earned, you want to stay in the game as long as you can and earn it. And your body is all you got. So you look after it." And he claims not to be unusual in avoiding booze, bad food and late nights. The days, he says, of top footballers living it large are numbered.

"It's all about education. We now get the best advice on diet, stretching, fitness. Us players needed that education; they had it on the Continent for years and all the foreign lads coming over, they brought that attitude with them. Anyhow, football is such a business now, they're going to make sure they get the best out of their product. They don't want it growing obsolete before they've got their money's worth out of it."

Product? Obsolete? Is that how the modern footballer thinks of himself? "You know from day one you're the product. Any footballer who thinks that there's any sentiment in this game had better think again."

Ferdinand speaks from first-hand experience. After establishing himself at QPR he was transferred to Newcastle United two years ago for $9.5 million. This summer he was transferred to Spurs, again for $9.5 million. Which, as a product, puts him in the same league as a top-of-the-range Lear Jet, or a superior gin palace in which to cruise the Med. Last Saturday, the two teams met at Newcastle's St James's Park and Ferdinand was back at the club which, the talk on the Tyne suggested, he never wanted to leave. "I didn't want to leave, it's true, because I felt we were on to something big there," he says.

"But I hold them no bitterness for selling me. I gave them two good years, and they obviously thought now I was 30, $9.5 million was good money. It's a business. What makes me laugh sometimes, though, is those chairmen who say footballers have no loyalty — they're only too happy to off-load us when they need the cash. Loyalty, you know, it cuts both ways."

So how long does he give it at Spurs before the product is sold on once more? Another two years? "Man, as long as possible, 36, 37, 38. But you can't look to the future in this game, you might get injured tomorrow and be out of it. Finished. Gone." Besides, he says, he has learnt from the worst experience of his life, to enjoy the moment. "My mum died of cancer just as I was beginning to make it. All my early life I'd been told by every Tom, Dick and Harry to look to the future. Then mum dies at 45, what future was she looking at? You know. It's the one regret of my life I could never repay her for what she done for me when I was a kid. Make no mistake, without her driving me, giving me the right values, I wouldn't have this.

"If she could have seen me on that pitch in Rome on Saturday, man, she'd have been bursting with pride." And with that thought, for a moment, the man who has everything looks as disappointed as a man who has nothing.

Sir Les: An Autobiography of Les Ferdinand, is published by Headline at £16.99

Tennis

Four-star victory for Rusedski

Chris Bowers

GREG RUSEDSKI'S 6-3, 7-6, 7-6 victory over Australia's Mark Philippoussis in the final of the Swiss Indoor Championships at Basel last Sunday gave him the fifth title of his career and took him into the world's top four when the rankings were announced on Monday.

But the 24-year-old left-hander is entitled to feel tired as well as chuffed; it was his 20th match in 42 days since the start of the US Open, and he was won all but three. Nor is respite at hand. He has already linked up with his new coach Tony Pickard for a tournament in Vienna.

Rusedski is now likely to become the first Briton to qualify for the eight-man world championship next month in Hanover. This would put the same week's British national championships in Telford in the shade, just when they looked like being the first to feature two players from the world's top 20.

The prospect of taking part in Hanover seemed a bigger deal to Rusedski than breaking into the top five. "No Briton has ever been to the tour championship, so that would be a great achievement.

"The most satisfying thing about winning here is the list of past champions," he added. "Sampras won here last year, Borg has won here, so has McEnroe, it's great to be part of that list." He might have mentioned that Britain's Roger Taylor also won the Basel title in the 1970s.

Unlike his British rival Tim Henman, who could also qualify for Hanover, Rusedski made the most of a slow start from the Australian. In last Saturday's semi-final Henman missed three break-points in the third game which proved to be his only chance in the Australian's 7-6, 6-4 victory.

In the fourth game of the final Rusedski, who won his first three service games to love, established a lead he was never to drop. In particular he was doing to Philippoussis what Henman had failed to do; dropping his returns of serve at the feet of the incoming volleyer.

The tactic forced Philippoussis to stay on the baseline and Rusedski's ground strokes always looked the more solid in the few baseline rallies that ensued.

Philippoussis had two chances to get back into the match. At 2-1 in the second set he was 15-40 up on the Rusedski service, only for the Briton to thump down a big serve and then craft a clever point which he finished with a smash. Those proved to be the Australian's only break points. Rusedski sealed victory on his first match point in the third set tiebreak.

There was a consolation prize for Henman. He and Marc Rosset later won the doubles title, beating Karsten Braasch and Jim Grabb 7-6, 6-7, 7-6.

Boxing WBC heavyweight title

Vital victory for quickfire Lewis

John Rawling in Atlantic City

AFTER more than eight years as a professional, Lennox Lewis probably produced the most significant win of his career when he blasted out the feared Pole Andrew Golota in only 95 seconds of controlled fury to retain his World Boxing Council heavyweight title here last Saturday. Only four world heavyweight title fights have ended quicker.

Ever since his devastating two-round victory over Donovan "Razor" Ruddock five years ago, Lewis, aged 32, has failed to reap the rewards expected of his massive reserves of natural talent. Now, not only has he earned considerable respect on the American side of the Atlantic, he can anticipate the opportunity to realise his dream of becoming undisputed heavyweight champion at some point in 1998.

With the World Boxing Association champion Evander Holyfield widely tipped to prevail over the International Boxing Federation champion Michael Moorer when they meet in Las Vegas on November 8, a Holyfield-Lewis showdown seems likely next summer.

Golota's two fights with Riddick Bowe last year, which he lost on disqualification through low blows after outboxing the former champion, had established his notoriety and a position as a major draw. The Convention Center was packed close to its 15,500 capacity for last weekend's fight.

Fears for the future of the sport proved unfounded, not so much because the 29-year-old from Warsaw accepted the Queensberry Rules, more that Lewis never gave him a second to contemplate stepping out of line. From the moment Lewis snapped back the challenger's head with his ramrod left jab, following up with his heaviest punch — the overhand right — the result was inevitable.

"I just wanted to make a statement to the world," the champion beamed afterwards. "I just wanted to prove my point that I am the best heavyweight in the world."

The near-hysterical support from Golota's flag-waving Polish fans did nothing to upset the champion and, as Lewis stepped forward to survey his territory during the pre-fight announcements, it was clear Golota was intimidated.

Lewis described his game plan: "I had told Golota, 'Welcome to the lion's den'. I just wanted to beat him before he could commit any fouls, and once I hurt him I knew I had to take him out."

Scarcely missing a shot, Lewis worked for an opening with his jab and, when it came, increased the power of his attack with shattering hooks to the head which sent Golota to the floor for the first time. The Pole's ice-blue eyes betrayed shock and panic before he jumped to his feet and was allowed to continue.

Lewis bided his time, then unleashed another barrage of punches to dump Golota on the canvas, and the referee Joe Cortez called a merciful halt.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Scotland on the Continental shelf

A THOROUGHLY miserable week for Scottish football ended with all three of its clubs taking part in European competitions being eliminated in the first round while Bell's announced it would not renew its current $9.6 million, four-year sponsorship deal.

Rangers lost 1-2 (2-4 aggregate) to RC Strasbourg in the first round, second leg of the Uefa Cup while Celtic again drew with Liverpool, this time 0-0 at Anfield, and although the aggregate score over the two legs was 2-2, Liverpool won on the away-goals rule. Kilmarnock, who had gone into the second leg of the Cup Winners' Cup with a two-goal deficit against Nice, could only manage a 1-1 draw and went out 2-4 on aggregate.

The decision by the distillers Bell's was prompted by the uncertainty caused by the proposed secession from the Scottish Football League of the 10 Premier Division clubs. The present sponsorship deal expires at the end of the season.

English teams engaged in Europe had mixed fortunes, with Manchester United, Newcastle United, Chelsea and Aston Villa as well as Liverpool making progress, while Arsenal and Leicester saw their European dreams end in despair.

Among the winners, Manchester United were the pick of the bunch. They beat the mighty Juventus 3-2 at Old Trafford in the Champions League — the first British team to defeat the Italian club in 18 years.

Alex Ferguson's men found themselves a goal down barely 20 seconds into the match, but they clawed their way back into the game when Teddy Sheringham headed the scores level shortly before half-time. Goals from Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs sent the United fans roaring with delight, but the visitors pulled one back in the final minute of the game. The victory puts United top of Group B.

Newcastle were another team who had to come from behind. Two goals down in 28 minutes to Dynamo Kiev, they ended the match on level terms, thanks to two late strikes by John Beresford. His second goal was a wicked deflection off a speculative shot from 30 yards. The two sides share the leadership of Group C.

Chelsea again beat Slovan Bratislava 2-0 in the Cup Winners' Cup. They went into this game convinced that an away goal would secure them overall victory. They got it in what would be a bum deal for the Slovaks.

Vialli: rear achievement

Midway through the first half, Miroslav Konig, the Bratislava keeper, cleared the ball with a powerful kick. Trying to avoid being hit in the face, Chelsea striker Gianluca Vialli, standing close by, turned his backside towards the keeper. The ball hit his behind, ballooned goalwards and bounced down off the crossbar and over the line. Roberto Di Matteo got the London club's other goal to give them a 4-0 aggregate victory.

A goal in extra time by the Serbian striker Savo Milosevic against Bordeaux at Villa Park edged Aston Villa 1-0 through to the second round in the Uefa Cup. Arsenal drew 1-1 with PAOK Salonika but went out 1-2 on aggregate. Leicester crashed out of the competition losing to Atletico Madrid 0-2 at Filbert Street and 1-4 on aggregate.

STEVE COLLINS, the World Boxing Organisation super middleweight champion nicknamed "the Celtic Warrior", took the boxing world by surprise when he announced his retirement from the ring, saying that he had run out of meaningful opposition and wanted to get out at the top. At the British Boxing Awards ceremony in London last week, where he accepted the award for Best Overseas Boxer, the 33-year-old Irishman said: "I don't have the motivation that I once had."

AUSTRALIAN motor-cyclist Michael Doohan's bad luck on home ground continued when he crashed in the 500cc Australian Grand Prix, the final race of the season, at Philip Island last Sunday. The Australian world champion had a comfortable early lead, but his Honda slid off on lap 16. Doohan, who was unhurt, also crashed while leading last year's race at Eastern Creek when he was hit from behind by Spain's Alex Criville. The Spaniard went on to the win the race last Sunday.

ANDRE FABRE'S colt Peintre Celebre broke the course record as he beat the best horses in Europe to win the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp last Sunday. Peintre Celebre appeared to be struggling to keep up with the furious pace set by Busy Flight and Helissio, but once jockey Olivier Peslier extricated it from the pack, it showed a fantastic turn of foot to sweep clear and win by five lengths, giving Peslier his second successive Arc triumph. Pilsudski came second with Borgia third.

Football results and tables

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Arsenal 5, Barnsley 0; Bolton 0, Aston Villa 1; Coventry City 0, Leeds Utd 0; Liverpool 4, Chelsea 2; Manchester Utd 2, Crystal Pal 0; Newcastle Utd 1, Tottenham Hotspur 0; Sheff Wed 3, Everton 1; Southampton 3, West Ham Utd 0; Wimbledon 0, Blackburn Rovers 1. Mon: Leicester 1 Derby 2

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Birmingham 0, Crewe 1; Bradford C 2, Wolves 0; Ipswich 1, Man City 0; Middlesbro 1, Sheff Utd 2; QPR 2, Charlton 4; Reading 4, Sunderlnd 0; Stockport 3, Portsmth 1; Stoke 3, Bury 2; Swindon 4, Port Vale 2; Tranmere 2, Norwich 0; West Brom 1, Oxford Utd 2.

Division Two: Bristol R 1, Wrexham 0; Burnley 2, Wycombe 2; Chesterfld 1, Bournemth 1; Fulham 3, Oldham 1; Gillingham 2, Bristol City 0, Grimsby 2, Wigan 1; Luton 0, Watford 4; Millwall 2, Blackpool 1; Preston 2, Brentford 1; Southend 0, Northmptn 0; Walsall 3, Carlisle 1; York 1, Plymouth 0.

Division Three: Cardiff 1, Barnet 1; Chester 3, Hartlepool 1; Doncaster 1, Brighton 3; Exeter 1, Scarboro 1; Hull 3, Torquay 3; Leyton O 1, Macclesfld 1; Lincoln 0, Cambridge 0; Mansfield 1, Colchester 1, Notts Co 1, Darlington 1; Peterboro 3, Swansea 1; Rochdale 2, Sc'thorpe 0, Shrewsbry 2, Rotherham 1.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Celtic 4, Kilmarnk 0. Dunfermline 3, Dundee U 3; Hibernian 3, Rangers 4; Motherwell 1, Hearts 4; St Johnstn 1, Aberdeen 0.

First Division: Ayr 2, Stirling A 1, Dundee 1, Airdrie 0; Morton 1, Raith 3; Hamilton 2, St Mirren 0; Partick 3, Falkirk 4.

Second Division: Clydebank 0, Stranraer 0. Clyde 1, Livingston 0, East Fife 3, Queen Sth 2; Forfar 2, Inverness 1, Stenhousemuir 3, Brechin City 2.

Third Division: Arbroath 3, Albion 0; Berwick 2, Cowdnbth 1, E Stirling 3, Dumbarton 1 Queens Pk 1, Montrose 1 Ross Co 2, Alloa 4

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	10	6	4	0	27	11	22
Man Utd	10	6	3	1	14	4	21
Blackburn	10	5	4	1	20	9	19
Leicester	10	5	3	2	14	8	18
Chelsea	9	5	1	3	24	14	16
Derby	8	5	0	3	16	[illegible]	15
Liverpool	9	4	3	2	16	10	15
Newcastle	7	5	0	2	7	5	15
Leeds	10	4	2	4	11	11	14
Aston Villa	10	4	1	5	11	15	13
West Ham	10	4	1	5	12	17	13
Coventry	10	2	6	2	8	11	12
Crystal Palace	10	3	2	5	9	13	11
Tottenham	10	2	4	4	6	11	10
Wimbledon	9	2	3	4	10	11	9
Sheff Wed	10	2	3	5	14	23	9
Bolton	9	1	5	3	8	12	8
Everton	9	2	2	5	11	16	8
Southampton	10	2	1	7	8	12	7
Barnsley	10	2	0	8	7	28	6

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

Division One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nottm Forest	10	7	1	2	15	5	22
Bradford C	10	5	3	2	14	13	18
Swindon	10	5	3	2	13	13	18
West Brom	10	5	3	2	12	9	18
Sheff Utd	8	5	3	0	11	4	18
Charlton	9	6	1	3	20	14	18
QPR	10	5	1	4	13	16	16
Middlesbrough	8	4	2	2	13	9	14
Port Vale	10	4	2	4	13	13	14
Birmingham	9	4	2	3	12	7	14
Stoke	9	4	2	3	10	10	14
Sunderland	10	4	1	5	14	15	13
Wolverhampton	10	3	4	3	12	12	13
Norwich	10	4	1	5	8	17	13
Stockport	10	3	3	4	16	13	12
Crewe	9	4	0	5	13	14	12
Bury	10	2	5	3	11	14	11
Tranmere	10	3	1	6	14	14	10
Oxford Utd	10	3	1	6	14	16	10
Reading	10	3	1	6	10	18	10
Man City	9	2	3	4	16	13	9
Ipswich	8	2	3	3	10	11	9
Portsmouth	10	2	2	6	12	17	8
Huddersfield	9	0	4	5	5	14	4

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Watford	10	7	2	1	18	8	23
Northampton	10	6	3	1	12	5	21
Bristol Rovers	10	4	5	1	14	9	17
Chesterfield	10	4	5	1	11	7	17
Preston	10	4	4	2	11	7	16
Millwall	8	5	0	3	14	9	15
Gillingham	10	4	3	3	12	11	15
Oldham	10	3	5	2	17	17	14
York	10	4	2	4	11	12	14
Fulham	10	4	2	4	10	9	14
Wycombe	10	3	4	3	17	17	13
Wigan	10	4	1	5	15	14	13
Blackpool	10	4	1	5	15	19	13
Bournemouth	10	3	4	3	11	9	13
Grimsby	10	3	4	3	9	10	13
Brentford	10	3	3	4	11	14	12
Wrexham	9	3	2	4	15	13	11
Carlisle	10	3	2	5	13	17	11
Bristol City	9	3	2	4	12	10	11
Walsall	10	3	2	5	12	14	11
Southend	10	3	2	5	9	16	11
Plymouth	10	1	6	3	9	12	9
Luton	10	1	3	6	5	18	6
Burnley	10	0	5	5	5	11	5

Division Three

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Peterborough	10	6	3	1	24	9	21
Notts County	10	6	3	1	16	9	21
Exeter	10	6	3	1	14	8	21
Scunthorpe	10	6	1	3	10	8	19
Cambridge Utd	10	4	4	2	16	12	16
Chester	10	5	1	4	15	14	16
Macclesfield	10	4	4	2	14	9	16
Barnet	10	4	3	3	14	14	15
Colchester	10	4	3	3	14	14	15
Scarborough	10	4	3	3	13	12	15
Lincoln	10	4	3	3	10	11	15
Hartlepool	10	3	5	2	14	12	14
Torquay	10	4	2	4	14	13	14
Cardiff	10	3	5	2	12	12	14
Leyton Orient	10	4	2	4	10	9	14
Rotherham	10	3	3	4	17	17	12
Rochdale	10	4	0	6	12	12	12
Mansfield	10	3	3	4	11	9	12
Shrewsbury	10	3	1	6	13	17	10
Swansea	10	3	1	6	13	[illegible]	10
Brighton	10	2	3	5	10	15	9
Darlington	10	1	5	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	8
Hull	10	1	2	7	11	[illegible]	5
Doncaster	10	0	3	7	[illegible]	[illegible]	3

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hearts	[illegible]	6	0	2	[illegible]	[illegible]	18
Rangers	7	5	2	0	[illegible]	[illegible]	17
Celtic	7	5	0	2	[illegible]	[illegible]	15
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	12
Dunfermline	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	12
St Johnstone	[illegible]	2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	9
Motherwell	7	2	2	3	[illegible]	[illegible]	8
Kilmarnock	7	[illegible]	2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	5
Dundee Utd	9	0	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	17	4
Aberdeen	[illegible]	0	3	5	7	16	3

First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hamilton	8	6	1	1	16	6	19
Dundee	8	6	1	1	14	5	19
Falkirk	8	4	1	3	15	18	13
Raith	8	3	3	2	11	9	12
Ayr	8	3	1	4	10	10	10
St Mirren	8	3	1	4	10	12	10
Airdrie	8	1	5	2	7	9	8
G Morton	8	2	1	5	9	14	7
Stirling	8	1	3	4	11	15	6
Partick	8	1	3	4	10	15	6

Second Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Livingston	8	4	3	1	11	6	15
East Fife	8	5	0	3	15	13	15
Forfar	8	5	0	3	15	13	15
Clydebank	8	3	4	1	11	6	13
Stenhousemuir	8	4	1	3	13	13	13
Stranraer	8	3	3	2	12	9	12
Clyde	8	3	3	2	9	9	12
Queen of South	8	2	1	5	12	14	7
Brechin	8	1	2	5	10	20	5
Inverness Cal	8	0	3	5	10	16	3

Third Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alloa	8	6	0	2	18	7	18
Arbroath	8	5	1	2	17	10	16
Ross County	8	5	1	2	19	14	16
Queen's Park	8	4	3	1	11	5	15
East Stirling	8	5	0	3	14	11	15
Albion	8	5	0	3	16	18	15
Berwick	8	2	1	5	11	16	7
Dumbarton	8	1	2	5	10	15	5
Montrose	8	1	2	5	11	21	5
Cowdenbeath	8	1	0	7	3	13	3

TV threat to Premiership

THE possible break-up of football's Premier League was signalled when Manchester United confirmed plans to set up its own subscription TV channel with BSkyB and Granada, *writes Ian King*.

The club, Britain's biggest, also indicated it would like to show live Premiership matches on it.

At the same time, BSkyB's deputy managing director, David Chance, revealed that the group was negotiating with at least two other Premier League clubs to launch similar channels, while Granada said it had also been approached.

At present, the Premier League is held together by its lucrative contract with BSkyB and the BBC which ties United and the other Premiership clubs to the broadcasters. If the clubs start to go it alone on TV deals it could spell the end of the league.

United's chief executive, Martin Edwards, indicated he would be happy for United to go it alone when the TV contract expires in 2002.

